

1-1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Cavitt, Chessley (2012) "A Resource Guide for 1 Peter," *Leaven*: Vol. 20: Iss. 3, Article 9.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol20/iss3/9>

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A Resource Guide for 1 Peter

CHESSLEY CAVITT

A quick look through a bibliography of research on 1 Peter will reveal a multifaceted history of research. You can find academic droughts when scholars overlooked the letter in preference for more popular books of the New Testament, but you will also notice a recent trend to return 1 Peter to a more prominent place in scholarship. Thus, even though it was true for a time that 1 Peter was thought of as an “exegetical stepchild,” scholars have been increasing the quantity and quality of research on 1 Peter, as is evident even in this volume of *Leaven*. The challenge, then, is navigating the vast amount of the available research on 1 Peter in order to mine the best possible aids for those who wish to preach, teach, or critically research and contribute to the scholarship of 1 Peter.

Introductory Materials

To begin, it is always helpful, whatever your interest in 1 Peter might be, to have a firm grasp of the background information (i.e., date and place of composition, authorship, purpose and occasion of writing, and audience). Usually the best places to begin answering these questions are dictionary articles, commentaries and various secondary sources. For 1 Peter, Paul Achtemeier’s article, *Peter*, in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006, 462–468) is an excellent article that attempts to answer all of the typical background questions in a thorough manner. Also, John H. Elliott’s *1 Peter* (Anchor Bible Commentary; New York: Doubleday, 2000) provides an impressive 306–page introduction that leaves no stone unturned in discussing the background issues of the epistle. Both of these sources not only provide answers to some of the most fundamental scholarly questions about 1 Peter, but they also can point you in the direction of other capable resources.

Exegetical Resources

In terms of exegetical sources to assist in translation, grammatical issues and establishing a solid foundation for research, there are two sources that are particularly valuable: Charles Bigg’s *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* in the International Critical Commentary series (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969) and *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text* by Mark Dubis (BHGNT; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010). Both of these works walk the reader through 1 Peter verse by verse, breaking down the grammar, syntax and style of the epistle. In the process, both of these works meticulously address almost every possible exegetical issue. One should note, however, that while these works are valuable tools in addressing exegetical issues, they are prone to efficiently interpreting the text without a thorough discussion of how they arrived at their conclusions; to better understand their reasoning, one should have a trusted Greek grammar and lexicon on hand.

Commentaries

Considering that people choose their commentaries with certain general preferences of style, audience and purpose in mind, here are some outstanding commentaries on 1 Peter arranged by purpose. For the student of 1 Peter doing historical/critical research on 1 Peter, the Hermeneia commentary by Paul Achtemeier (Minneapolis:

Fortress, 1996) and the Anchor Bible Commentary by John H. Elliott (New York: Doubleday, 2000) are both essential tools for delving into the most scholarly issues of the text through the use of the traditional exegetical tools and criticisms. Similarly, the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament by Karen H. Jobes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) and the Abingdon New Testament Commentary by M. Eugene Boring (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999) are both exegetically thorough, but they are also more accessible than other, more dense, academically driven commentaries; thus, Jobes' and Boring's commentaries will be beneficial for a wide audience. For someone interested in commentaries that make direct applications, the Interpretation commentary by Rheme Perkins (Louisville: John Knox, 1995) and the Sacra Pagina commentary by Donald Senior (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003) are formatted with the application of interpretation in mind. Both the Sacra Pagina and Interpretation commentaries not only interpret the text; they also aid the reader in applying the interpretation of 1 Peter to a modern audience. Also, Joel Green's volume of the Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) is a unique style of commentary that approaches the text of 1 Peter exegetically and theologically in a way that is simultaneously aware of the scholarly and theological issues of the letter; as such, Joel Green's commentary is a helpful tool for ministerial purposes.

Books and Collections of Articles

There are many books on 1 Peter to choose from, but here are a few that cover a broad spectrum of topics and viewpoints and also contain valuable bibliographic information. *The Christological and Rhetorical Properties of 1 Peter* by Sharon Clark Pearson (Lewiston: Mellen, 2001) addresses the complex christological issues of 1 Peter, which are many and essential for understanding the epistle. *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* by Barth L. Campbell (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) addresses the Greco-Roman setting of 1 Peter in order to help the reader better interpret the epistle in light of its original setting. And finally, *Perspectives on First Peter*, edited by Charles H. Talbert, has recently been reprinted (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010). This helpful volume offers a collection of essays on various topics of 1 Peter, including a short introduction to the ongoing debate between John Elliott and David Balch regarding the situation and strategy of 1 Peter.

General Resources

Finally, here are some general New Testament resources that are also helpful for the study of 1 Peter. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson's *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) is an essential tool for identifying the Old Testament texts referenced by 1 Peter and for learning how the author of 1 Peter was interpreting and applying the Old Testament. Similarly, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012) contains several indices that can help one find parallels to the text of 1 Peter in literature such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Greco-Roman philosophy and Judeo-Christian apocryphal materials. More broadly, the IVP *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Development* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997) is a great source to quickly and effectively look up a variety of topics, themes and questions that arise from the study of 1 Peter. Also, for those who are interested in how the early church interpreted 1 Peter, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001) provides interpretations on the epistle from ancient church leaders such as Origen, John Chrysostom and Tertullian. And, recognizing that the sources mentioned are by no means comprehensive, Anthony Casarella's *Bibliography of Literature on First Peter* (New York: Brill, 1996), while fifteen years old, is a well-organized and virtually unabridged list of all the known research on 1 Peter at the time of its publication.

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