

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE®

SENIOR ADULTS Personal Study Guide

SUMMER 2020 | CSB

STUDY 1:

*Living with Hope
in a Broken World*

STUDY 2:

*Why Do I Need
the Church?*



BETTER THAN ANY LIFETIME GUARANTEE

When choosing between products and services, one feature will catch our attention: a guarantee. If we purchase something that turns out to be broken or faulty, we like the assurance of knowing we can get our money refunded or get a replacement without charge. Without that guarantee, we often have no hope of getting our money back or getting a new item.

Our lives are broken. We've marred and ruined our lives with our own sin. But what guarantee do we have for replacing our sin-filled life with new, better life? The Bible tells us that the wages for our sin is death (Rom. 3:23).

We do have hope. It's not a hope that comes from our own efforts or resolving to do better. It is a hope that comes from Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty of our sin and brokenness with His own death (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). When we turn away from our sin in repentance and turn to Him in faith, Christ gives us a new life, freed from the penalty of sin. We are made new in Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

God's unfailing promise is the best guarantee we can be offered. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

To receive a new life in Christ, you can pray a prayer like this:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins and rose from the dead to give me new life. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Be baptized as an expression of your faith. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith.

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Lynn H. Pryor
Team Leader

Chris Johnson
Content Editor

Ken Braddy
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Brandon Hiltibidal
Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor
by email to chris.johnson@lifeway.com
or mail to:
Content Editor
*Bible Studies for Life: Senior Adults
Personal Study Guide*
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234

Or make comments on the web at
www.lifeway.com

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WELCOME

Summer! For many of us, summer reflects a break from the rest of the year. But summer should not include a break from discipleship and growing in Christ. I'm glad you're including your Bible study group as a part of your summer plans. Through our studies from 1 Peter and Ephesians, we will be encouraged and disciplined to live unashamed lives—lives of service to God and others.

This particular summer has an additional feature: politics! We are in the midst of campaigns, speeches, debates, and a lot of promises. This book includes a special focus session to help us navigate these days as a follower of Christ. The study from Romans 13 leads us to see how we should respond biblically in these days of debates and disagreements.

Enjoy your summer—and enjoy these studies. May God richly bless you.

Chris Johnson

Content Editor, Bible Studies for Life: Senior Adults
chris.johnson@lifeway.com



My group's prayer requests

Handwriting practice lines for notes.

THE PATHWAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? LifeWay’s research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2022.

8 MARKERS	FALL 2019	WINTER 2019-20	SPRING 2020	SUMMER 2020
OBEY GOD AND DENY SELF	Simplicity: Finding Contentment in a Busy Life			
SEEK GOD	How to Know God’s Will			
SHARE CHRIST		Answers to Tough Questions: Defending What You Believe		
EXERCISE FAITH		When Life Gets Hard: Big Questions About Pain and Suffering		
ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE			Holy Vocabulary: Unpacking the Language of Faith	
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS			Dealing with Messy Relationships	
LIVE UNASHAMED				Living with Hope in a Broken World
SERVE GOD AND OTHERS				Why Do I Need the Church?

LIVING WITH HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan:

Live Unashamed. Because believers' hope rests in Christ, knowing their hope in Him cannot be shaken, they can approach the questions and challenges of life with confidence. Our hope in Christ strengthens us to stand strong in a broken world.

- Session 1 **The Basis for Our Hope** (1 Peter 1:1-9)
- Session 2 **The Expression of Our Hope** (1 Peter 1:13-25)
- Session 3 **The Testimony of Our Hope** (1 Peter 2:4-15)
- Session 4 **The Endurance of Our Hope** (1 Peter 3:8-17)
- Session 5 **The Joy Arising from Our Hope** (1 Peter 4:1-2,12-19)
- Session 6 **The Culmination of Our Hope** (1 Peter 5:5b-11)

WHY DO I NEED THE CHURCH?

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan:

Serve God and Others. As we deepen our understanding of God's call to the church—His body—we discover we are not alone in our service and ministry. Our service is enhanced—even multiplied—as we walk alongside and support one another.

- Session 1 **We Are Joined Together** (Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:8-10,19-22)
- Session 2 **We Pray for One Another** (Ephesians 3:14-21)
- Session 3 **We Support One Another** (Ephesians 4:1-7,11-16)
- Session 4 **We Encourage One Another** (Ephesians 4:17-32)
- Session 5 **We Strengthen One Another** (Ephesians 5:8-21)
- Session 6 **We Stand Together in Spiritual Battle** (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Introduction



LIVING WITH HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD

Hope comes in lots of sizes and shapes.

- ▶ We hope our investments and financial planning will pay off when it comes time to retire.
- ▶ We hope this next diet will be the one to get us back on track.
- ▶ We hope the candidate we elect will make a positive difference.
- ▶ We hope the weather will be perfect for our upcoming vacation.

While we might feel confident that our hope is well placed, such hope is never certain. People disappoint. Circumstances change. Christ, however, is faithful and unchanging. When we place our trust in Him, we gain a hope like no other.

Because the believer's hope rests in Christ, we know our hope in Him cannot be shaken; therefore, we can approach the questions and challenges of life with confidence. Our hope in Christ gives us courage to stand strong in a broken world. Our hope in Christ sets us apart from the rest of the world in how we face suffering and how we respond to difficult circumstances, and it ultimately gives us a platform to share God's goodness and hope.

When your hope wavers or when you're tempted to place your confidence in earthly things that disappoint, how can you remain anchored to Christ as your hope? This study will examine the uniqueness and basis of biblical hope. Whether in suffering, pain, prosperity, or contentment, learn to place your hope in God alone and testify of His hope to the world around you.

MICHAEL CATT

Michael has been the senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, since 1989. He and his wife, Terri, have two daughters. Michael has a heart for pastors and a passion for revival and awakening. He blogs about ministry, revival, and the church at michaelcatt.com.

SESSION 1

The Basis for Our Hope



QUESTION 1:

*When have you been glad
you didn't give up?*

THE POINT

Only hope in Christ is sure and certain.

THE PASSAGE

1 Peter 1:1-9

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Florence Chadwick was a champion long-distance swimmer. She swam the 21 miles across the English Channel in 1950, and she did it faster than any other woman in history.

In 1952, she set her sights on a loftier goal: the 26-mile route between Catalina Island and the California mainland. Through an oil leak, nausea, and extreme fatigue she swam for over 15 hours. Then heavy fog set in on the coastline, temperatures began to change and Florence's breathing became labored. Since she couldn't see the shore, she feared she was swimming in circles and lost hope. The skilled athlete did something she had never done before: Florence gave up and asked to be pulled from the water.

She learned she had stopped a half mile short of her goal.

Like Florence, we too can lose hope. But the apostle Peter pointed to the sure hope we have in Christ. We may become weary and discouraged, but victory is much closer than we realize. It's all because of our hope in Christ.

1 Peter 1:1-3

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ:

To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

KEY WORDS: **Foreknowledge** (v. 2)—Literally “to know beforehand”; because God is both omniscient and omnipotent, He not only knows but works through people and events to accomplish His eternal plan.

Sanctifying (v. 2)—To “sanctify” is to make something or someone holy, to set that thing or person apart for God’s purposes.

Peter had become one of the main leaders of the church after Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. His ministry was primarily to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-8), and Jesus had charged him to tend the flock by feeding and nurturing them (John 21:15-17). Peter was one of Jesus’ twelve apostles, which meant He was sent with full authority to carry the gospel and spread the message of the kingdom of God.

Peter’s letter reflects his care for God’s people. Peter loved these Christ-followers and wrote to encourage them not to give up, lose hope, or grow weary. He reiterated this purpose when he closed his letter: “Through Silvanus, a faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!” (1 Pet. 5:12).

So why did these people need hope? These opening verses tell us. They were “living as exiles,” scattered all throughout the Roman

Empire in northern Asia Minor (which is modern-day Turkey). Exile was often a form of punishment, but that was not the case for these believers. They were exiles and strangers because this world was not their home. For all of us who have placed our trust in Christ, this world is not our permanent residence. We live as strangers and exiles because “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). We live in this world for a time, but we are citizens of heaven; we are headed for a better world than the one we now know.

As we read through 1 Peter, it becomes clear these believers were facing opposition and suffering. Life was not all sunshine and rainbows for those who followed Christ. Nero was the Roman emperor at this time, and he was known for his cruelty. Peter may have been writing before Nero’s brutal opposition against Christians became known, but he recognized that opposition would continue to intensify (1 Pet. 4:12). He wanted these men and women to be ready, holding fast to their hope in Christ.

In light of these trials, some of the believers perhaps wondered if they had fallen out of favor with God. Was the Christ-life worth it, and could they persevere in the midst of difficulty and strife? In answer to these questions, Peter reminded them of their identity: God had chosen them. Nothing about their salvation and life in Christ was based on their own initiative. They had been chosen by the Father and had experienced “the sanctifying work of the Spirit.” God doesn’t just call us to salvation, but He also gives us His Holy Spirit so that we might be sanctified—set apart to become more and more like Jesus.

This new identity points to a purpose: our obedience. Whether circumstances are easy or incredibly challenging, our selection by God and sanctification by the Spirit are to result in our obedience to Christ. Understanding this identity and keeping this purpose in view would be crucial for Peter’s initial readers in living out their faith in hostile environments.

Peter then turned his attention to one of the main themes of his writing in this letter: *hope*.

Ancient Rome had a saying: “While there’s life, there’s hope!” But, Warren Wiersbe reminds us, “Like most adages, it has an element of truth but no guarantee of certainty. It is not the *fact* of life that determines hope, but the *faith* of life.”¹ We have a living hope by placing our faith in God. This “living hope” has been secured for us by Christ’s finished work on the cross. It’s not based on a positive mindset, wishful thinking, or our striving to make things work. Living hope is ours because we’ve been chosen by God, saved by the death and resurrection of His Son, and set apart by His Spirit.

QUESTION 2:

What’s the difference between a living hope and other sources of hope?

1 Peter 1:4-5

4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

5 You are being guarded by God’s power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

After reminding his readers of their identity and purpose, Peter elevated their viewpoint and lifted their eyes to see that this living hope is kept in heaven. Our hope is secure for eternity. Nothing can diminish it, corrupt it, divert it, or destroy it.

John Huss was a Bohemian priest who held to the truth of Scripture as his final authority. Before being burned at the stake for his beliefs in 1415 he wrote, “Our inheritance will never lose anything through age or sickness on our part or through any damage to itself; it will never be marred by impurity and it will never be lessened in delight because it has been enjoyed so long.”²

Peter described this inheritance using three adjectives rich in meaning.

1. **Imperishable.** Our inheritance in Christ cannot be stolen and won't succumb to decay. *Imperishable* describes a territory so secure that no invading force can destroy it. Peter assured believers that no one can take away our inheritance, and nothing can separate us from it.
2. **Undefiled.** This word relates to the purity of our inheritance. Our inheritance is thoroughly fire-resistant and in every respect unstained by the world. It is completely and wholly pure.
3. **Unfading.** Our inheritance will never lose its glory. Other treasures may diminish in their appearance or value over time, but our inheritance in Christ will never grow dull, never become dim, never be destroyed, never fade.

Peter reminded believers that we are “guarded by God’s power through faith.” This paints the picture of a fortress that has been built beyond any and all danger, constantly shielded and garrisoned by God. This same power protected the three young men in Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace (Dan. 3:16-30), guarded Daniel in the den of lions (6:10-23), and shielded Paul through shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, and imprisonment (2 Cor. 11:24-28). God’s power would keep the recipients of Peter’s letter during oppression and persecution—and it will keep us no matter what we face. These verses were not idle words from Peter; his hope was secure and he wrote from that firm conviction grounded in truth. We can stand in these same truths and stand firmly on the hope of Christ even when circumstances may tempt us to believe otherwise.

Without good theology rooted in the truth of God’s Word, we are subject to the whims of culture, the downward pull of negative people, and our own feelings. When hope seems lost and negativity wins the day, we’ve allowed people and circumstances to rule our minds instead of renewing our minds in His truth. Never forget who God is, what He has done for us through Christ, and what is reserved for us in heaven.

DIGGING DEEPER

HOPE IN 1 PETER

The theme of hope will be found throughout the study, **Living with**

Hope in a Broken World. For a deeper explanation of hope as confident expectation, see the article on pages 24-27.

QUESTION 3:

How have you seen the world's hope perish, become defiled, and fade over your lifetime?

1 Peter 1:6-9

6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials

7 so that the proven character of your faith — more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire — may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy,

9 because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

For the believers Peter was addressing, their faith helped them endure the suffering they were facing. Their hope in the future kept their hearts fixed on Christ and the promise of an everlasting inheritance. Our hope in Christ is displayed in our faith. Faith and hope are intertwined. John Piper noted the connection:

“I would suggest that faith is the larger idea and hope is a necessary part of biblical faith. Hope is that part of

faith that focuses on the future. In biblical terms, when faith is directed to the future, you can call it hope. But faith can focus on the past and the present too, so faith is the larger term. ... You might put it this way: faith is our confidence in the word of God, and whenever that word has reference to the future, you can call our confidence in it hope. Hope is faith in the future tense.”³

Many things distinguish those who make up the body of Christ. We have different personalities, temperaments, backgrounds, and preferences. But we all have one thing in common: the experience of pain and tears. We all go through suffering in some form. In this letter, Peter referred to godly people and their suffering fifteen times. However, based on God’s power and our inheritance, the righteous can rejoice in the midst of trials or suffering we face.

In these verses, we see five characteristics of trials.

1. **Trials vary in nature.** (“various trials”) Trials come in all shapes and sizes.
2. **Trials are temporary.** (“even though now for a short time”) God allows us to go through the furnace, but as the refiner He controls the thermostat. Our trials are limited in the face of eternity.
3. **Trials are difficult.** (“you suffer grief”) This phrase carries the idea of heaviness. The verb means to experience pain, grief, or distress. Trials are taxing, and they can drain us physically, emotionally, mentally, and relationally. Let’s face it: trials are tough!
4. **Trials have a purpose.** (“the proven character of your faith”) Gold is refined by extreme heat in order to remove impurities and thus increase its value. A Christian is refined by God to be a reflection of His glory. God’s refining process is intended to remove those things that keep us from being like Jesus, and this often occurs through the fires of suffering. If our faith can’t be tested, then it can’t be trusted, and trials forge in us a stronger faith.

5. **Trials should result in rejoicing.** (“may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ”) The consummate glorious reality of our trials is the revelation of Jesus. One day we will see Him and know Him fully. We may not see Him in our trials, or we may think He is distant, but He is there. It will be worth it all when we see Him. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, “our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). And the same is true for us today!

QUESTION 4:

What does it look like to rejoice in the midst of life’s hardships?

ENGAGE

Rejoice! Because of your salvation in Christ, you have hope! Use the space below to express your sense of joy—record a prayer, draw a picture, share a story, record song lyrics—in a way that feels authentic to you.

QUESTION 5:

When have you seen faith turn a trial into a triumph?

LIVE IT OUT

When tempted to despair and give up in defeat, remember that you have a living hope secured by Christ.

- ▶ **Recognize.** Admit to God the areas where you're losing hope. Confess any sin and ask Him to open your eyes to the reality of living hope in Christ.
- ▶ **Remember.** Read through 1 Peter 1:1-9 again and make a list of how Peter described those who follow and trust in Christ. Place this list in a prominent place to remind you of who you are in Christ.
- ▶ **Restore.** Is there someone the Lord has brought to your mind who is losing hope? Take time to meet or call them this week and share the truths the Lord has shown you in this study.



END NOTES

- 1 Warren Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary* (BE Series) - New Testament, Volume 2, Wordsearch ed.
2 Lenski, Richard C., *Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 34.
3 John Piper, "What Is Hope?" <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-is-hope>.



HOPE IN 1 PETER

By Gerald L. Stevens

After the New Orleans Saints football franchise was created in 1967, the team languished in the doldrums of defeat. I, along with other loyal fans, waited every year with eager expectation for the next season. Forty-three years we waited. Suddenly, like living a dream, fan loyalty paid off when the saints won Super Bowl XLIV in 2010. New Orleans exploded with exuberant celebration. An estimated 800,000 screaming fans lined the streets for the victory parade.¹ The wait for the head float to turn the corner was almost unbearable. I craned my neck in confident expectation that Coach

Trajan's column depicting the Dacian Wars stands in the forum in Rome. Trajan's statue is no longer at the top of the column, but Peter's. Emperor Trajan ruled AD 98–117.

Sean Payton and the Super Bowl trophy would soon be coming around the bend. I had hope to see the victorious team. I had hope for the trophy, and I had a solid reason for that hope—because the Saints were champions.

CONFIDENT EXPECTATION

Sometimes we do not reflect on the extent to which hope powers our everyday lives. The power of hope is fundamental to Christian life. Christian hope powers the Christian's life. Christian hope is the confident expectation that what God has promised in Jesus Christ, God will deliver. Such hope carefully needs to be distinguished from wishful thinking. Wishful thinking has no solid reason as its basis. As a result, hope in general conversation means uncertainty about the outcome. Christian hope, on the other hand, is a completely different reality. Christian hope is the opposite. Christian hope is a certainty about the outcome.

This hope has a solid reason as its basis. This hope is solidly based on what God already has done. God already has sent his son to die for our sins and raised Jesus from the grave (1 Thess. 5:9-10). The battle already has been fought and the game already won. The victorious team will be coming around the corner any moment with trophy in hand.

One of the great epistles of Christian hope is 1 Peter. Before we are even three verses into this wonderful epistle, the word *hope* figures prominently in

an opening benediction: “Blessed be the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”² The way we would say this colloquially is, “done deal!” Why was this message so amazing to Peter's audience? Because, the ancient world did not have hope.



Bronze portrait, likely Sophocles, a Greek playwright who lived 496–406 BC.

ASTOUNDING MESSAGE

The Greek word for “hope” in 1 Peter 3:15 is *elpis*. This word is defined three ways: (1) in terms of expectant longing with reason for certainty; (2) in terms



Equestrian statue of Rome's Emperor Marcus Aurelius (ruled AD 161–180). A classic stoic, Emperor Marcus Aurelius's work *Meditations* called for obedience to nature and the suppression or mastery of personal passions. Further, Stoics believed hope was a vice and thus was to be avoided.

of its ground; and (3) in terms of its object.³ The Christian life is filled with courageous hope and expectant anticipation that is reflected even in creation itself (Rom. 8:18-21). The ground of Christian hope is what God already has accomplished in Jesus by raising him from the dead (1:4). The object of hope is God himself (1 John 3:2). Since God is author of life, the object of hope is resurrection to new life (Acts 23:6). Since God has accomplished this new life in Jesus, who already has been resurrected from the grave, the object of hope also can be described as being brought to glory through Jesus (heb. 2:10). Peter's favorite way of speaking this truth is to describe Christian hope as a "living" hope

(1 Pet. 1:3). The hope is living because the object of that hope is living.

No other "philosophy" in the ancient world had such a marvelous message based on such solid ground. Interestingly, one will search long and hard to find much discussion of hope in the ancient world. Major philosophies were propounded without even having much to say about hope. Stoicism even taught hope was a vice, not a virtue.⁴ Cynicism seemed more to rule the day. Without knowledge of a personal and caring God, why would cynicism not prevail? Those outside the Christian faith are, as Paul said so well, "without hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

The attitude one sees in the playwright Sophocles, one of the most famous Greek tragedy writers from the fifth century BC, might have been common among citizens walking the streets of Athens. Sophocles deadpanned,

Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best;
but when a man has seen the light of day, this
is next best by far, that with utmost speed he
should go back from where he came.⁵

The Christian message flooded into this void of the human heart in the ancient world with an overwhelming message of God's love (John 3:16) and extraordinary hope for a glorious future (Rom. 5:2; 8:24).

The unique message is why Peter exhorted believers to be ready at any moment to explain the "hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Uncertainty of the outcome of faith never was a hallmark of Christian preaching. Christian hope was core to this preaching that produced a unique message not heard anywhere else in the world. This exclusive message really was "news," and "good news" at that. The unique message is why Peter exhorted believers to be ready at any moment to explain the "hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). In fact, Peter anticipated that unbelievers would persecute believers, because those without faith cannot understand Christian hope. Christian hope is based on what God actually did in Christ, an astounding truth to try to fathom, yet meeting the need of every human heart (v. 16). We all need hope. God in Christ meets that need. 📖

1. Ramon Antonio Vargus, "New Orleans Saints Super Bowl Parade Crowd Was Largest in Memory, Organizer Says," *The Times-Picayune*, www.nola.com/superbowl/index.ssf/2010/02/new_orleans_saints_super_bowl_9.html.

2. Scripture quotations are the writer's translation.

3. (*elpis*, hope) in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), 252-53.

4. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 358.

5. Sophocles, *The Oedipus of Colonus of Sophocles*, ed. Richard Jebb (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1889), line 1225.



Gerald L. Stevens is Professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana.