

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 1
WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 15



GROWTH GROUP FALL 2019
STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND: FINDING HOPE IN 1ST PETER
WEEK 1 – SEPTEMBER 15, 2019 - 1 PETER 1:1-9

SETTING THE CONTEXT

This fall we are going to be taking a look at the letter of 1 Peter. This letter was written sometime during the period of 62-68AD and more than likely was written from Rome – which is also referred to as “Babylon” in the book of Revelation. Some scholars believe that 1 Peter was written during the time of Nero’s persecution of the Christians in Rome which began in 64AD and others believe it was written right before this persecution began.

The author of this letter is Simon Peter, who had been one of twelve apostles of Jesus. The theme of the book could probably be summed up with 1 Peter 5.12b where Peter writes, “I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.” Peter writes to believers who are scattered and encourages them to stand firm in the faith, to not give up, and to keep on placing their hope in Jesus. As we read through the letter we will see Jesus lifted up as their hope, their savior, their example and their Lord.

This letter is not concerned with an announcement or introduction to who Jesus is or what he accomplished. Nor is it addressed to just one congregation. Rather, the letter is addressed to all of the believers in Asia Minor and would have been read in numerous congregations.

Peter wants to deepen the faith of all the believers, so that they may face the testing that is coming their way, or that they are currently enduring. He wants to address the issue of how you live as strangers in a strange land.

God has chosen these believers to be His people, and because of God’s mercy, they have been given new birth into a living hope. For Peter the resurrection of Jesus was life changing. Peter’s words of denial were not the last things that he remembered. Instead, he had seen and talked with the risen Christ. Jesus had restored Peter. This was his living hope!



Verse 3 shows us that God has established our hope in Jesus Christ, and verses 4-5 show us how God maintains that hope. Peter writes that we have received an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade because it is kept for us, and we are also kept for it. Peter had heard Jesus talk about treasure in heaven, and now he reminds his listeners that this treasure belongs to them. They are “heirs” of a great inheritance through Jesus Christ.

In verses 6-9, Peter deals with the reality of the sufferings they are going to have to endure because they are followers of Jesus. He wants to assure his listeners that not only can they endure these trials, but can actually rejoice in hope, when these trials come. These trials push us to rely on the Holy Spirit and as we trust in God our faith is “proved genuine.” Peter assures them that their trials can actually bring about a deepening of their faith.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read 1 Peter 1:1-9

¹ This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God’s chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. ² God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace. ³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. ⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. ⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. ⁸ You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. ⁹ The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

- 1) If you don’t all know each other, take a minute and introduce yourselves. Share something about your Summer or something you’re excited about.
- 2) This letter is written to “God’s chosen people who are living as foreigners”. What does it mean to be a foreigner in a foreign land?
- 3) In verse 2, we find references to all three parts of the trinity. Discuss the rolls or functions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit outlined here.
- 4) Verse 6 tells us that, “you must endure many trials for a little while”. Why do you think Christians must endure trials?
- 5) There are a lot of powerful words in this passage. Discuss what terms like “Mercy”, “Grace”, “Peace” and a Christian “Inheritance” mean to you, and how you experience them in your life.

- 6) Peter, who wrote this letter, is famous for denying Jesus three times, and experienced God's mercy first hand. Share a time when you feel that, like Peter, your faith has faltered, or you have not lived up to the challenge.
- 7) Then, as you read verses 6 through 9, reflect on how you receive God's mercy, and how that effects your outlook on life.

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Considering the various places where you hang out (community, job, school, church) do you feel more like a citizen or foreigner? Why? Substitute the terms resident or visitor, native or immigrant – does that change your response?