



Session 1: 1 Peter 1:1–25

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, & doing.

Main Idea: Rightly understanding our identity as citizens of God’s kingdom and aliens in the kingdom of darkness will equip us to love our fellow Christians well.

Head Change: To know that our experience in our world as foreigners is part of what God has planned for his people.

Heart Change: To feel welcome in the family of God despite our alien status in the world.

Life Change: To identify and modify the behavior patterns we’ve picked up by living in the world.

OPEN

When have you felt left out or excluded from something? Maybe from a game during school, a group of friends, or a planned event. **How did you respond to being left out? What emotions did it spark in you?**

No one likes rejection. It’s never comfortable feeling like an outsider, but it might surprise you to know that it’s part of our identity as Christians in this world. That’s one of the main themes of 1 Peter—exile. In Christ, we have become citizens of heaven and our hope no longer lies in our lives today, but in the second coming of our Savior.

READ

Read 1 Peter 1:1–25.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Kyle’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

What relationship do believers have to the world in which we live?

What two things does Kyle say we experience simultaneously as Christians?

What are the two responsibilities Peter tasks his readers with?

Show Session 1: 1 Peter 1:1–25 (10 minutes)

DISCUSS

What are some examples of ways that you have felt like an outsider because of your faith?

Think back to some of the suffering or trials you've faced. **How did you react toward your circumstances? What did your reaction reveal about the posture of your heart? What obstacles might keep you from seeing suffering and opposition as an opportunity for Jesus?**

As Kyle explained, Peter wrote his letter to Christians experiencing persecution throughout the Roman Empire. During the first three centuries of the Church, believers were feverishly oppressed for their faith. They were threatened, imprisoned, and violently executed as entertainment, like that of the gladiatorial exhibitions. This is the context Peter was writing to address so let's take a look at what he had to say. Someone read 1 Peter 1:1–12.

PEEK AT THE GREEK

Peter addresses his readers as “exiles” in verse one, but he prefaces the term with an important modifier—*eklektois*. In English, we typically translate the term “elect,” but it describes someone or something that is selected or chosen. Peter is not writing to exiles in general, but to those “elect” or “chosen” exiles of God who have been scattered across the Roman Empire under the sovereign care of their Lord.

Throughout the Old Testament, God speaks of Israel in these terms as his chosen people (Deut. 4:37; Ps. 106:5; Isa. 14:1), but now Peter applies similar terminology to believers in Christ—a theme woven throughout his letter (1 Pet. 1:2; 2:9). Even more, most scholars believe that Peter's primary audience would have been Gentiles instead of the Jews, who were used to being exiles. From the outset, Peter reminds his readers of their identity. Salvation in Christ extends beyond the borders of Israel. The church of Jesus Christ is God's chosen people, a new nation composed of every tongue and every tribe. Peter saw fit to assure his readers of who they were before offering instruction for how to behave, a priority we would do well to embrace in our own spiritual lives.

In these first few verses, it's clear that faith and suffering are not mutually exclusive. The truth is quite the opposite. From the beginning of the Church, Christians have always faced opposition and we would be naïve to expect anything different. Because of that, we should place our hope not in our temporary circumstances, but in the new life we have through Christ.

Based on these verses, how would you define the “living hope” Peter mentions?

What are some of the words or phrases that stick out to you from Peter's description of our life in Jesus? What words or phrases stand out from Peter's description of our experiences with suffering?

According to verse 11, what did the “Spirit of Christ” predict about the earthly ministry of the Messiah? How should Christ's experiences inform the way we think about our own suffering?

Who is an example in your life of someone who demonstrated joy in suffering? How was their joy visible? What kind of effect did it have on you?

According to verses 6–7, how does Peter describe the “grief” and “trials” we face in life, specifically in terms of their duration? Why does God allow us to experience them?

How should this truth about your identity in Christ shape the way you respond to suffering and hostility? What could change about your behavior in light of the truth that your suffering is never a surprise to God?

Scripture contains a lot of commands, but God never tells us what to do before He tells us who we are. Through the first twelve verses of his letter, Peter follows this same model reminding persecuted Christians that they are children of God, and their suffering is being used to refine their faith. But that still leaves us with the question of what we are to do with our lives between now and the time that we meet Christ in glory? Someone read verses 13–25.

Which of Peter’s instructions stand out to you the most from these verses? In what ways are they relevant to your spiritual walk today?

There are a number of imperatives throughout this passage, but Kyle grouped them into two general commands—live holy and love others. That’s the abbreviated version of what Peter is communicating. During the session, Kyle defined the meaning of holy as something that is “separate” or “set apart.”

Where do you find it most difficult to “live holy” in your daily life? What truth can you take away from this week’s passage as an encouragement toward holiness?

Living holy in the context of suffering means facing our circumstances in a way that is set apart, namely, with the joy of our hope in Christ. **How has suffering provided you with opportunities to share your faith? If not you, then how have you seen it provide opportunities for other Christians to share theirs?**

What opportunities do you have to serve other believers in your midst today? How can you be an encouragement, especially to someone who may be suffering?

In the weeks ahead, we’ll see this principle applied more broadly to unbelievers, but Peter begins his letter to a suffering community by reminding them of their identity in Christ and calling them to lives of holiness and love for another. A needed reminder for us all.

LAST WORD

Life with Christ is one of both joy and suffering. The trials we face remind us that this is not our home. Because of his sacrifice, our hardships are temporary, but our hope is eternal. Even more, through faith in Christ the Holy Spirit has transformed us such that we can face suffering with joy. Our hope is no longer rooted in our circumstances, but in the unchanging faithfulness of God.

Kyle ended the session by reminding us that our identity always drives our behavior. Who we are determines how we will live. If you have trusted in Christ, then you are a new creation and hardship provides the opportunity to reflect that to the world. So, take heart in the difficult days. They are not a surprise to God, and He allows them to refine your faith and bring glory to his name.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Reflect on the list you made at the beginning of the session of the ways you’d like the Lord to grow you throughout this study. Take some time now to offer them to God in prayer and ask him to give you a heart that is receptive to his truth.

Memorize: Commit 1 Peter 1:13 to memory as a constant reminder that Christ is the only worthy source of our hope in this life.

Encourage: Identify someone struggling, maybe even another believer having a hard time with feelings of being an “outsider.” Make an intentional effort to encourage him or her with the hope of Jesus, that He is near and at work within even if we cannot see it.