

1 Peter 1:1-12

Week 1 - Keys To The Kingdom

Learning Objectives

- Gain a better understanding of what it means to be heirs of the Kingdom of God.
- As heirs, know how we are called to respond in the midst of trials.

Pray for your time together as a group.

? What is the most significant gift you've ever received? Why was it meaningful to you?

Optional Transition: In this study we're going to talk about the best gift we could have ever been given—new life in Christ.

Read Out Loud: 1 Peter 1:1-12 (NIV)

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Although 1 Peter 1:3-10 contains punctuation in our English Bibles, it is one continuous sentence in the original Greek. The ability to carry on an extended thought or argument was considered the hallmark of a skillful orator in antiquity. Here, Peter expresses gratitude to God for His salvation through the person and work of God's Son, Jesus.

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the

things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

? Peter praises God for several different reasons in verses 3-5. Which of these stands out to you the most? Why?

Possible Answers: He praises God because of (1) a new birth into a living hope, and because of the (2) inheritance we now have because through this new birth, we are now children of God.

? What do you think of when you hear the word “inheritance”? What do you think it meant to Peter’s original audience (vs. 4)?

Possible Answers: Today, we usually think of inheritance as purely monetary. Someone dies and leaves their family with money, possessions, a business, or some other legacy. Typically, inheritance in the Jewish culture of that time was usually meant for the 1st male son only. For Peter to say that ‘all’ believers are now heirs is a big shift in thinking for that time. The result of our promised salvation: heaven and being in continual relationship with God for eternity.

Leader’s Note: This is understandably a very broad and difficult concept as many other possible interpretations exist for the word ‘inheritance.’

Who Elects the Elect?

The nation of Israel was designated as God’s chosen or elect people (Deut 4:37; Isa 45:4). In the New Testament, this term is expanded to include the Church, which consists of both Jews and Gentiles. Peter was an apostle to the Jews (Gal 2:7–8), but the churches he writes to in 1 Peter in Asia Minor were probably full of mostly Gentile (non-Jewish) members. (Faithlife Study Bible, Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, Bible Gateway)

? What exactly is the inheritance that is being kept in heaven for us?

Possible Answers: We are separate from this world; we have assurance of our salvation; we are aligned with God; we now perceive our lives with an eternal perspective; our lives now look different from the rest of the world (i.e. we will face trials that the rest of the world won’t face).

This last point should be emphasized: We, as Christians, are to expect trials in this life (John 16:33).

? If we have already received our salvation, then what will be revealed to us “the last time?”

Possible Answers: Christ’s work on the cross has delivered us from both physical and spiritual captivity. But while we’re here on Earth we are still witness to the effects of sin even if we are no longer mastered by it. Peter alludes to a future when we will experience the full deliverance of Christ in Heaven.

? Optional: How does your status as an heir of Christ impact your view of life right now? How could it shape your attitude when you encounter difficulty?

Possible Answers: Could vary, but remaining focused on Christ should help us keep a positive attitude and retain a heavenly perspective when we face challenges. Sometimes our troubles don't look nearly as big when we look at them through the lens of God's grace.

? What are some practical ways we can remind ourselves of the truth that we are heirs to the Kingdom of God?

Possible Answers: Holding onto Scripture about our identity when we feel the pressure of the world's definition of who we are (our identity), ask our small group members to hold us accountable to where we're placing our worth, viewing the circumstances we face with this perspective and allowing it to shape our response.

Optional Transition: Continuing on in our passage, we find that a normal part of the Christian life—being heirs—means experiencing suffering.

? According to vs. 7, what happens to faith when it is tested by a trial?

*Possible Answers: Trials occur to prove the genuineness of one's faith **and** to promote praise and worship of God. Faith that remains true in the face of suffering is more valuable than any worldly possession. Leader's Note: Be careful to not get tripped up here on questions about the problem of evil. Also, be cautious in not trivializing someone's interpretation of a trial they've faced (or are currently facing). Comparison isn't helpful when it comes to difficulty—if it's impacting you, then it's important!*

? What is your typical, natural reaction when bad things happen to you? Why do you think that's your reaction?

Possible Answers: Wallowing in self-pity, complaining to others, vengeance, doubt, bottling it up emotionally, abuse of alcohol, disappointment that the world does not revolve around me. It's instinctive. It's easy. It makes me feel good temporarily. It allows me to not actually address the issue. It's an escape.

? What does Peter suggest should be our focus in the midst of trials? How might we find hope by shifting our focus away from ourselves?

Possible Answers: Remembering that we are a part of something greater—the Kingdom of God—and heirs to that Kingdom. Praising God for who He is and what He has done for us. It takes the burden off of us to make things "better" or come to a positive outcome. We can rest in knowing that whatever the outcome of our trial, our salvation is still secure and God is still great.

? How is it countercultural to praise God in the midst of hardship?

Possible Answers: The world tells us to wallow in our struggles, blame others, wax eloquent about them on social media, and gather as much sympathy (or animosity, depending on the circumstance) as possible.

? How can our counter-cultural responses to trials and difficulties turn into ministry opportunities?

Possible Answers: It can be an opportunity to share that our hope isn't found in our present circumstances, but in something greater. Our overall attitude can point people to the Gospel and the foundation and assurance that's found there. It can open up doors for conversations with others about their own struggles and offer alternative solutions/responses.

? How can we, as a small group, support each other in the midst of the trials we face?

Questions For Discussion And Accountability

? In what areas of your life are you not living like an heir of the Kingdom of God?

? How can you choose to worship God in the midst of life's trials and difficulties?