



“Inside Out”
1 Peter 2
Small Group Plan

Many of us grew up with a heavy dose of heaven hymnology:

*Sing To Me Of Heaven
When We All Get To Heaven
To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
There Is A Habitation*

Great songs, and for some, heaven is thought of as the natural conclusion and climax to a life filled with a growing faith, lived for God here on planet earth. But sadly, for others, this longing for a future home in heaven is not really connected to life here in the present world. Habits remain the same. Plans for each day are not altered by a developing faith. Speech, relationships, behavior do not surrender to the spiritual leadership of Jesus. In fact, once the “salvation” ticket is punched, life continued on just as it has been, with little or no growth or change.

A friend of mine once asked the question, “*What’s the difference between a man with ten years of experience and a man with one year of experience, ten times?*” The answer? The man with tens year of experience actually grew each year. There was a slow but steady change in his life as one year built upon the progress of the previous year. But the man with one year of experience, ten times, just repeated his first year over and over. There was no real change. He was in a rut. He probably hated it, but as we sometimes say, “*He had become adjusted to his rut.*” It was familiar, even comfortable in a twisted sort of way. I think that popular writer Brian McLaren had the first man in mind when he said,

*The Gospel is not an evacuation plan
but a transformation plan*

Will heaven be a ticket that I purchase and then put away until the day that I have to pull it out at the end of my life? Or, will heaven be the next logical, seamless step in a life that has been constantly growing and changing since the first day that God’s grace entered? Is your faith an evacuation plan or a transformation plan?

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Growing up, what was your favorite heaven hymn? What did you like about it?
- How can we **long** for heaven, and still fully **live** here on the earth?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— GROWING —

I am a child in God's family

1 Peter 2:1-3

¹ Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

- To what does the word “therefore” refer?
- What has a “newborn babe” accomplished and what still lies ahead?
- How does it hurt our faith to think that we have accomplished our goal when we rise from the waters of baptism?
- What do “malice ... deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander” have in common?
- How will they damage a life of faith and hurt relationships of faith?
- How can “craving” a relationship with God push malice ... deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander” out of our lives?

— BUILDING —

I am a stone in God's temple

1 Peter 2:4-8

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him — ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” ⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” ⁸ and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for.

- Notice that Peter is careful to say the stones are alive (vs. 4, 5). Why?
- What is the purpose of this temple, this “spiritual house” (v. 5)?
- Twice Peter describes Jesus as the stone rejected:
 “rejected by humans” (v. 4) “the builders rejected” (v. 7).
 Why was he rejected then and why do many reject him today?
- In spite of his being rejected Jesus has become the “cornerstone” (vs. 6-7).
 What is the function of a cornerstone and how has Jesus played that role in the lives of Christians for centuries?
- Why is Jesus a stumbling block for some?

— SACRIFICING —

I am a citizen in God's Kingdom

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- How does it feel to be “chosen” and “special” (v. 9)?
- How would you describe the “darkness” (v. 9) of our world?
- Why would God call us out?
- Contrast and discuss God's justice and God's mercy (v. 10).

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

A Colossal Craving

“Crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment ...” (v. 2 NLT)

- Practically what does craving for God look like in a Christian's life?
- What is a “full experience of salvation”?

A Conscious Cleanup

“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” (v. 1 ESV)

- How would you advise someone to begin a moral “cleanup”?
- Why is community important in any effort to change our thoughts and lives?

A Clear Calling

“But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you — from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.” (vs. 9-10 MSG)

- How can we tell of God's work in our lives in a way that is both powerful and humble?
- How would you describe the night-and-day difference God makes in your life?
- Close with prayer, praising God for His mercy and grace.