

Aim of lesson

To consider what Peter writes to some new churches and to us.

Bible background

1 Peter 1:1-4 and 2:1-12.

Outline of lesson

... from every nation under heaven

Remind the class of the time when Peter preached to crowds of people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They had come to Jerusalem for the Jewish feast and had learned from Peter about the good news of Jesus. They had been baptised, but most of them would have gone back to their homes after the feast. It would be useful to have a map marked with the places mentioned in Acts 2:5-12. You could use a photocopy of the blank map at the beginning of the workbook, and mark the appropriate places.

I wonder ...

Ask the class to turn to the workbook and look at the picture of Peter thinking about these new Christians far away. Ask the class to suggest what Peter might be thinking, e.g.: "I wonder how they are getting on?", "Are they being persecuted?", "Do they remember what they learned about Jesus?" Ask the class what Peter would expect the new Christians to be doing. This question can be used to review the activities and attitudes of the early church discussed in last week's lesson. Have them fill in the thoughts of Peter in the workbook.

Peter's letter

Introduce the first letter of Peter. Have the class turn to the letter and look at 1:1. Three of the places mentioned are also mentioned in Acts 2 so some of the people Peter is writing to may have been baptised by Peter at Pentecost, and others may have been preached to by those who had been to Jerusalem and were on their way home. Have the class consider why Peter would write a letter to them. Draw out that he would want to encourage them in their new life as Christians, and to teach them more of Jesus, and to let them know that he was thinking of them. (Jesus had told Peter to look after his sheep and that is what he is doing now: John 21:15-17.) It is possible that Peter had travelled to visit some of the other converts from that day if he is visiting Babylon (1 Peter 5:13), as some from Mesopotamia were present at Pentecost. However, the word 'Babylon' may be a code-word meaning Rome or Jerusalem; Babylon itself was probably uninhabited at the time (see Jeremiah 50:35,39).

The next set of questions in the workbook are about the new birth and growth of the young Christians. Encourage the class to think about what the answers mean, especially what good things they should be taking into their minds. What they read, watch and do can be good food for their minds or poison, and will affect the way they grow. The things to get rid of are in 1 Peter 2:1 and can be written in the boxes in the rubbish bin. The two boxes are to encourage the class to see what a wonderful position the Christians are in, having been born into the family of God.

Building or stumbling?

Read together 1 Peter 2:4-8 and get the students to identify the builder and the stumbler in the workbook. They can then choose to colour all the areas of the 'stone' marked with a cross or with a dot. Depending on which they choose, the word 'precious' or 'stumbling' should be revealed. Discuss with them how the stone, Jesus, can be to us a precious foundation for our lives or a stone that causes us to stumble and fall. The choice is ours. You may like to remind the class of the parable Jesus told of a man who built his house on a rock and one who built his house on sand. There is a similar idea in each picture. To do what Christ teaches us is to build our lives on the precious foundation rock of Jesus. To choose our own way is to end up flat on our faces (Matt. 7:24-27).

Digging deeper

Last letters

This is an overview of the last nine books of the New Testament: who they were from and to, and something of what the letter to the Hebrews is about. (The other letters, and Revelation, are covered in other lessons). It suggests learning the names of the books in order.

Relevance to our lives

The class may like to each ask a brother or sister what one thing they consider most important in order to grow as a Christian. Have the class share the ideas they have collected next week.

Prayer

The class may like to write a prayer that Peter might have prayed for those growing but scattered churches. Alternatively they may prefer to write a prayer for a church today which is isolated by distance.

Other suggestions for activities

- An older class may like to read Peter's first letter during the previous week and choose a point to talk about to the rest of the class.
- A large picture/collage could be made to explain further Peter's teaching about the building of the church. The ideas of Jesus as the foundation corner stone, the way we should fit in with each other and support one another, and the fact that it is to form a place where God is at home – all these ideas could be developed.