

COUNTER CULTURE

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

1st Peter 1.1-9 | June 3, 2018

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I. Introduction to this Series and Study

This week we begin a new series we're calling Counter Culture. That title might conjure up memories of the turbulent 1960's, but we're going back ever further than that, engaging a first century letter sent to disciples of Jesus in various Roman provinces in present-day Turkey. Throughout this letter, its recipients are referred to as exiles and resident aliens – they are instructed to live differently than the world around them. Indeed, to *counter* the *culture*!

II. Connecting with One Another

Think back to the last time you met someone for the first time. How did you introduce yourself? What are the parts of your identity you chose to highlight?

III. Study the Text

a. Read 1st Peter 1.1-2.

Peter identifies himself as an apostle, meaning “a sent one” or “an accredited messenger.” This may have been used by Peter to reveal to his audience that he was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples or to remind them of a visit in which he founded churches in their area (as we will see, residents of this community did not know Jesus during his earthly ministry).

Why do you think it was important for Peter to use this particular title at the beginning of his letter?

b. After referring to himself as an apostle, Peter describes his audience in three ways. First, they are the “elect” (some translations have added “God’s”). Secondly, they are “exiles” (or, in various translations: strangers in the world, temporary residents, aliens, or sojourners). Third, they are “scattered” or “dispersed” throughout Gentile nations. With these three brief descriptions, Peter has clarified their theological relationship, the transient nature of life on earth, and their underlying spiritual unity wherever they live.

How could these descriptions seem contradictory?

How does each of these descriptions speak to your journey of faith?

c. Using your own words, how would you explain our special identity in Christ?

What can happen if we embrace – or fail to embrace – these truths about who we are? In other words, what happens if we forget our identity?

d. Peter’s clearly Trinitarian structure reveals the origin, manner, and goal of God’s choosing, while echoing Exodus 24.3-8. One author concludes, “The effect is to



confirm that the readers are truly God's people in a relationship that the hostile world cannot break."

How does our obedience to God's commands reveal our identity to others?

- e. Read 1st Peter 1.3-5.

Peter echoes similar prayers also found in 2nd Corinthians 1.3 and Ephesians 1.3, which may have become traditional prayers in the church. In these verses there are references to past, present, and future. Write these phrases here:

Past:

Future:

Present:

How would deeply internalizing these truths transform your life?

- f. What do the phrases "new birth" and "living hope" mean to you?

- g. Read 1st Peter 1.6-7.

Peter writes that we will suffer "all kinds" of trials (literally: "many colored"). He will use the same word in 4.10, to describe God's grace. "In whatever 'color' troubles appear, God's grace will always 'match' them and prove perfectly sufficient."

How has God "matched" the colors of your suffering with His grace?

- h. Peter asserts that suffering and trials benefit our faith. How does – and doesn't – this make sense to you?

- i. How have suffering and trials "proved the genuineness" of your faith?

- j. Read 1st Peter 1.8-9.

What does Peter say are Christians' reasons for joy?

- k. Why do you think it was important for Peter to note that Christians are already receiving "the result of our faith"?

IV. Pray

- Sit quietly, for as long as you can, basking in the truth of your new identity in Jesus,
- Ask God's Spirit to reveal the ways you can live more counter culturally for Him,
- Lift up those you know who don't yet know Jesus and that your countercultural life might point the way to salvation in Him.

V. Digging Deeper

- Learn more about Peter's life of faith in Mark 1.16-18, Mark 8, Matthew 16.22-24, Mark 14.31, 66-72, and John 21.15-17.
- For more on "elect," "exiles," and "scattered," see 1st Chronicles 16.13, Psalm 105.6, Deuteronomy 4.37, Hosea 11.1, Isaiah 43.21, Ephesians 2.19, Philippians 3.20, and Hebrews 11.13 and 13.14.

