

BORN AGAIN!

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 PETER 1:1-12

*Salvation in Christ is the sovereign plan of God to save His own.***The STORY**

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

God's People have been chosen. Peter opens his letter with a blessing to the Gentile believers scattered throughout Asia and the surrounding lands. In these first two verses, he summarizes the whole of his letter. God's people are not primarily identified by nationality, or by their works. They are chosen people — chosen according to the knowledge of God.

From eternity past, God knew His people and His saving work through which they would become His people. God's choice of His family was not based on a future view of their good works. He chose His own out of love. The Gentiles were not an afterthought to a plan for the nation of Israel gone bad. All of God's people, whether Jews like Peter, or Gentiles like Cornelius, were known to God in Christ from eternity past.

Knowing God's sovereign choice in election should cause us to repent of our sins. Those who falsely think they control their own salvation may think they can sin for a while now and choose to follow God later. But the Bible warns against this. Today is the day of salvation; if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart but repent and believe for the salvation of your souls. Those who repent and place their trust in Christ are believers saved by God's grace through their faith. Those who reject God are lost.

God's people have been born again. Peter is writing to Christians who will soon suffer persecution under Nero of Rome. To encourage them, Peter reminds them that their salvation is in Jesus Christ, who gave them new birth through His death, the "sprinkling of blood," and His resurrection. Peter then moves on to remind them of their inheritance in Christ, which can never be lost. No matter what earthly trials we endure, we have the hope of heaven with Christ. An inheritance that will never spoil or fade awaits us.

God's people are refined through trials. Peter uses the example of gold being refined as an illustration of what God does in the lives of believers. When gold ore is mined, it contains other minerals and impurities. When the ore is melted, the impurities are separated from the gold and can be skimmed off the surface of the molten metal as dross.

God uses this kind of testing in two ways. First, persecution removes those with insincere faith. Only those with sincere faith are willing to endure persecution. Those without genuine faith recant their beliefs. Secondly, God sends all kinds of trials to expose weaknesses and idolatries so that we might repent and grow in our faith (see James 1:2-4).

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

This is a wonderful window into the Old Testament prophets and their lives. Peter tells us that the prophets had a sense that the things they were writing were not for themselves but for a future generation. As a result they searched intently into the very words they themselves proclaimed. They knew salvation was hidden in God's prophetic words. Imagine Isaiah when God gave him the fifty-third chapter of his book. Isaiah knew those words did not concern the immediate situation in Israel, and he longed to understand just how God would bring salvation.

Even the angels long to look into the mystery of God's plan revealed. The amazing thing is that we know — and can believe. That plan, that mystery, is the gospel!

ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Zechariah 13:7**Connecting the passage to Christ:**

Jesus quoted Zechariah in Matthew 26:31. He told the disciples that on that very same evening they would all fall away on account of Jesus. Peter objected, saying that even if all fell away, he would never fall away. Of course, we know that Peter did fall away, denying Christ three times. When Zechariah wrote and possibly spoke these words, he likely wondered what they meant. Like all the prophets, Zechariah knew he was not writing these words for the Israel of his day, but for another day (see 1 Peter 1:10-12).

Questions for reflection:

- Who is the shepherd in Zechariah's word? (Jesus is the shepherd.)
- How was the shepherd struck? (Jesus was arrested, mocked, and beaten, and then crucified for our sins.)
- How did this scatter the sheep? (The sheep were those who followed the shepherd — that is, His disciples. When Jesus was arrested, they were scattered, fearing for their own lives.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY**BE A DOER OF THE WORD**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

TRAINING WHEELS AND FLIGHT SIMULATORS**Supplies:**

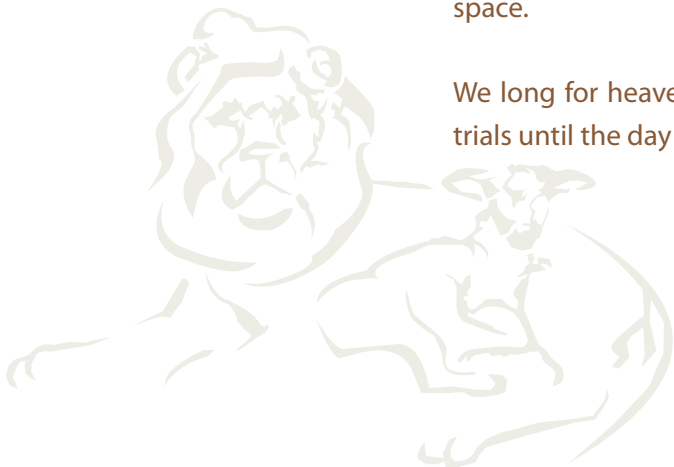
You can bring in a bike with training wheels if you would like to make a bigger impact with this illustration.

Use the following two illustrations to help your children understand and appreciate longing for heaven in the midst of current trials.

Training wheels: Think of children riding bikes with training wheels. They do enjoy riding, but they long for the day when the wheels will be taken off and they can ride where ever they want to go. They endure the hardship that comes with learning to ride, the falls and the scrapes, but they long for the day when there will be no more falls. That is how we should see our lives here

Flight simulator – When astronauts train they don't give train with real spaceships. They are shielded from danger by practicing inside a simulator. That way if they crash, they don't get hurt. Although flying to outer space in a simulator is fun, it is nothing like actually going into space. Astronauts endure the long hours and training looking forward to the day when they will actually be able to float in space.

We long for heaven in the same way. Here on earth we are being trained by our trials until the day we will be with Christ.



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GOD'S CHOSEN**Supplies:**

A brand new roll of quarters, enough for one for every child in your class.

Use this illustration to help the children understand the way God's sovereignty and our responsibility work together; how God's election and our receiving salvation by faith converge. (Note: Since this is an illustration, it is imperfect, but it is still helpful to make the points noted below)

Go around the room and ask each child if they would like a quarter. When they say yes, tell them that you planned to give them one since Friday, or the day you picked up the quarters. Do this over and over and over with each student.

Then ask the students the following questions:

- Why did I give you the quarters? (Because I love you and wanted to give you a gift.)
- Why do I love you? (There is no reason other than you are my class.)
- Did you do anything to earn the quarters? (No, we did nothing.)
- Did I require you to receive the quarter? (Yes, you asked us if we wanted one.)
- Could someone have refused a quarter? (Yes, anyone could have refused a quarter.)
- Did anyone refuse? (No, everyone wanted a quarter.) Why did everyone want a quarter? (Because it is a valuable gift.)

Help the children see that this is how our salvation works. God chose us even before we were born. He chose us out of love not based on our works. He offers every one He chooses salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ. Although we receive this free gift by faith we can not say we earned it.

Then explain that it is by God's grace that we can have faith to believe in the gift. Those who God does not give the gift of faith refuse to believe. They reject God and remain in their sin.



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REFINING WITH FIRE

Supplies:

- hot plate
- small clear Pyrex glass bowl (Your are going to be heating this glass bowl)
- specially prepared Ice cubes

Use this exercise to mimic the illustration of gold being refined.

Prior to class fill ice cube trays ½ full of water and sprinkle small chips of cork on top of them and allow the water to freeze. Then add a little more water to cover the cork and freeze it. Finally add a little more water to ensure the chips are frozen into the ice. This becomes your gold with impurities.

Read through 1 Peter 1:6-9. Explain that God uses trials to perfect our character. The example is the refining of gold. Explain to the class the heat is the trial which melts the gold, releasing the impurities.

While you are talking about this, tell the class that you are going to show them how this works. Fill your bowl with the contaminated ice cubes. Add water to cover them. The chips should now be frozen and visible throughout the entire bowl. Ask them if they would drink that water? They will object due to the impurities.

Next place the bowl on the hot plate and turn it on. Tell the class that turning up the heat is like the trials God sends into our lives to make us pure.

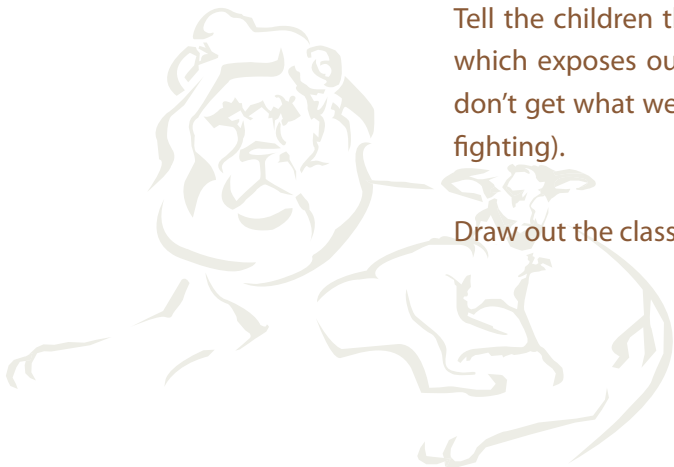
While you are waiting, share James 1:2-4 with them.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

As soon as the water starts to heat up, the ice will begin to melt and the cork will float to the top where you can scoop it off easily.

Tell the children that is what God does with trials in our lives. Trials are the heat which exposes our sin. Refer back to James from the previous lesson. When we don't get what we want (a trial) our idolatries are exposed (by our quarreling and fighting).

Draw out the class as to how God has used trials to strengthen their faith.



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HOW BIG IS NINETY FEET TALL?**Supplies:**

- 2 rolls of heavy duty aluminum foil
- half dozen helium balloons
- 90 feet of yarn

Nebuchadnezzar's idol was ninety feet tall. Use the following prop to better help the children understand just how big this was. Purchase two rolls of heavy duty aluminum foil. Cut just enough off the rolls so that the remainder is a total of ninety feet long. As you are teaching have volunteers pull out the foil across your classroom from the two rolls. It is fun to do this right overtop of the children's heads. Then explain to the children that you would need to put both pieces together to make ninety feet tall. They will be amazed at just how big ninety feet is.

Another way to do this (If you have a window in your classroom is to get a half dozen helium balloons attached to 90 feet of yarn. The balloons will be strong enough to pull up the yarn which is thick enough to be seen. Then have the children walk to the windows to see just how tall Nebuchadnezzar's idol was. If you want you can do two of these strings nine feet apart to demonstrate the width of the idol as well.

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of gold being heated with a strong fire. Write across the top of your page: "Trials refine our faith"



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES**MINING THE PROPHETS****Supplies:**

Paper and pencil

Review Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12 as an example of what Peter was talking about in 1 Peter 1:10.

First read through 1 Peter 1:10-12 and make sure the students understand what Peter is saying.

Then assign the girls to review one passage and the boys to review the other. Have them write down all the connections they see to Jesus and our salvation in Christ next to the verse number they see it in from their passage. When everyone has had a chance to finish the exercise, review their work as a class. Remind them that these scriptures were written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Born again – Comparing conversion to a new birth was first introduced by Jesus to Nicodemus when Jesus said, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (see John 3:3). John opens his Gospel by saying, “to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (see John 1:12-13).

Paul also speaks of conversion as a rebirth to Titus (see Titus 3:5) and James tells us that God, “chose to give us birth through the word of truth” (James 1:18). Although not all of these references use the same Greek word, they clearly all describe our conversion as being born again.

