



## EVERYDAY CHURCH

### (1) Life at the margins

#### 1 Peter 1.1-12

### Opening up! Connecting with each other.

If a story comes to mind, share a time when you felt like an outsider – maybe you turned up to a party as the only one in fancy dress!

### Listening in!

#### INTRODUCTION

Read 1 Peter 1. 1-12

Peter writes to the exiles (other versions of the passage speak of foreigners, strangers). It is a key motif in the letter. Commentators say this may be the result of the Roman policy of colonizing conquered regions by moving people to new locations. It may include those who moved because of persecution. It can also refer to the alienation their new Christian way of life has created. Peter's readers are on the margins of society. This ties in with where the church in the West is, with, on the whole, declining church attendance, secularism, and living in a post Christian context, where the church finds itself moving from the centre to the margins, majority to minority, privilege to plurality, from being in control to being a witness, from maintenance to mission, from institution to movement. We may not be often persecuted but we can be marginalised. One piece of evidence for this is when a leading politician is not allowed to answer a question about their faith because the press officer says 'we don't do God'.

### Discuss

- What signs do you see that Christianity is being marginalised?

Three experiences of the early church:

1. Hostility to Christians: Peter says that his readers 'may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials (1.6). Around the world many Christians are persecuted today.
2. Hostility from surrounding culture: the Roman Empire projected its glory and power with its idols, standards, symbols and buildings. Perhaps consumerism is today's idolatry.
3. Unquenchable hope: hope is kept burning through the presence of the Lord (1 Peter 1.8) who suffered and was not defeated (1.11). Jesus was marginalised ('Jesus also suffered outside the city gate' Hebrews 13.12). From the margins we point to God's coming world and offer an alternative lifestyle, values and relationships.

In what ways does this passage show:

- there is good news amidst the bad news?
- that Christians can not only survive but thrive?

### Looking out!

How do your answers to the last two questions apply to your life?

How do they encourage you on your frontline?

How do they challenge you?

### Looking up!

Prayer encourages us to 'Rise up church with broken wings' as the song puts it. (A line from Martin Smith's song 'Men of Faith').

Spend some time in prayer, wait on God and invite the Holy Spirit to teach you what you should pray for yourselves and then pray. Especially pray for anyone hostile to Christianity who you have talked about.

### Following up!

For those who want to study further, Kip recommends the book 'Everyday Church - mission by being good neighbours' by Tim Chester and Steve Timmis.