

# **Small Group Guide: "Unlocking the Kingdom - Peter's Restoration"**

**Series: Encounters (Post-Resurrection Stories)**

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## **Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to receive His message of forgiveness and restoration. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.

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## **Icebreaker (10 minutes)**

**Question:** Have you ever lost a key or been locked out of somewhere important? How did you feel, and how was the situation resolved?

*(This helps set the stage for discussing spiritual "keys" and locked doors in our lives.)*

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## **Key Scripture References**

- **Matthew 16:16-19** - Jesus gives Peter the keys
- **John 20:21-23** - Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples
- **John 21:15-17** - Jesus restores Peter three times

- **Revelation 1:17-18** - Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades
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## **Discussion Questions**

### **Part 1: Understanding Peter's Journey (15 minutes)**

1. **What aspects of Peter's story do you most relate to?** (His boldness? His failure? His denial? His restoration?)
2. **Why do you think Jesus had to restore Peter specifically three times?** What does this teach us about God's approach to our failures?
3. **The sermon mentioned Peter was "locked" by his unforgiveness and shame.** What are some common "locked doors" that keep people from experiencing God's freedom today?

### **Part 2: The Keys to the Kingdom (15 minutes)**

4. **Jesus told Peter he would give him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven."** What do you think these keys represent based on the sermon?
5. **Read John 20:22-23.** What's the significance of Jesus breathing on the disciples? How does this connect to Genesis and the creation story?
6. **The sermon stated: "The key to the kingdom of heaven is the forgiveness of sins and new life."**

How does this definition challenge or expand your understanding of the gospel message?

### **Part 3: Personal Reflection (15 minutes)**

#### **7. The pastor asked several "I wonder" questions:**

- How many times are we too busy to share our witness?
- How many times do we judge without knowing someone's full story?
- How many times do we fail to forgive ourselves?

**Which of these questions hit home for you personally?**

#### **8. Corrie Ten Boom said, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you."**

Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there something you need to forgive yourself for?

#### **9. The sermon mentioned we sometimes "tuck Jesus in a drawer" and only pull Him out once a week.**

What would it look like for you to live with daily dependence on Christ this week?

### **Part 4: Practical Application (15 minutes)**

**10. Jesus told Peter three times to "feed my sheep."** What does spiritual nourishment look like in practical terms? How can we "feed" others with the gospel?

11. **The story of the rusty church door illustrated how we stop believing things still work.** What "doors" in your spiritual life have you stopped trying to open because you've stopped believing they work?
12. **The sermon challenged us to "unlock some doors for some people" by proclaiming the good news.** Who is one person in your life that needs to hear about God's forgiveness and restoration this week?
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## **Key Takeaways**

- ✓ **Peter needed to experience forgiveness before he could share it with others**
  - ✓ **The keys to the kingdom are the message of forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life in Christ**
  - ✓ **Jesus meets us in our failure and restores us for His mission**
  - ✓ **The Holy Spirit empowers us to unlock doors in people's hearts through our witness**
  - ✓ **Forgiveness sets both the forgiven and the forgiver free**
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## **This Week's Challenge**

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Unlock a door of forgiveness:** Reach out to someone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from
  2. **Use your "key":** Share your testimony of God's forgiveness with someone who needs hope
  3. **Feed His sheep:** Provide spiritual nourishment to someone through encouragement, prayer, or sharing Scripture
  4. **Daily declaration:** Start each morning by saying "My Lord, my God" and asking how you can serve Him that day
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## **Closing Activity (10 minutes)**

### **Reflection Exercise:**

- Give each person a piece of paper
  - Ask them to draw or write about a "locked door" in their life
  - On the other side, write "Jesus has the key"
  - Share (if comfortable) and pray for one another
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## **Closing Prayer**

Pray together using the sermon's closing prayer or create your own, focusing on:

- Courage to use the keys God has given us
  - Grace to forgive as we've been forgiven
  - Boldness in witness and testimony
  - Freedom from locked places in our hearts
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### **For Further Study**

- Read the full account of Peter's denial (Luke 22:54-62) and restoration (John 21:1-19)
  - Study other "key" passages: Isaiah 22:22, Revelation 3:7-8
  - Research the early church's growth in Acts 2-4 to see Peter using his "keys"
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### **Notes for Group Leaders**

- Be sensitive to those struggling with unforgiveness (of self or others)
- Create a safe space for vulnerability about failures and locked doors
- Emphasize God's grace and restoration, not condemnation

- Encourage specific, actionable steps rather than vague commitments
- Consider having tissues available—this topic can bring up deep emotions