

We just started a brand new study of 1 Peter. I hope you are all excited. This book is filled with encouragement and exhortations. My prayer and desire for all of us is to dig deeper into God's word and learn its meaning. However as important it is to grasp what the original writer wrote and what the original audience understood from those writings, it is equally important to understand what the text says to us today. It is highly significant to be able to make applications for our day to day lives. And yet what is the use of learning all the precepts and principles and their applications to our lives, if they do not bring any tangible and practical changes into our beliefs and behaviors. I love how Jesus concluded the greatest sermon ever preached found in Matthew 5 – 7. His conclusion was it does matter what you know but what is of eternal significance is what you do with what you know (Mt. 7:24-27).

**START YOUR TIME with your group with some interaction.** Use this first question and encourage everyone to participate. If necessary, start from yourself.

1. **Share something** about what stood out to you from this Sunday's sermon.

**(Hint:** This can include how the presentation of the sermon was delivered that is different from the past, the subject, key principles, stories and events, something new that you did not know before, an aha moment or anything else).

2. **Have you ever** been in a long distance courtship or dating relationship. Did you ever have to communicate with your beloved through the means of snail mail or email? Share some of your feeling, actions and experiences during that time.

**Hint:** You can ask these questions to get the conversation going.

Were you constantly checking the mailbox outside of your house or on your laptop? How did you feel when you got mail? Did you read it in one sitting or did you read a few sentences and went to do an errand or went to work and came

back and read a few more sentences and finally after couple of days you were able to finish the whole letter?)

(You can also make it personal by sharing your own experience of a long-distance relationship or share the one at the bottom which is my true story.)

*"I have been there and done that. I have been in a long-distance relationship at one point, and I can tell you that I spent more time in front of mailbox, fax machine and computer than anywhere else. And when I got that letter or fax, I read it over and over and over again. Getting that letter became more important than my job, rest, food and entertainment."*

#### YOU CAN THEN TRANSITION BY SAYING:

**That is what the Apostle Peter is doing.** He is communicating through the means of a love letter to a group of people he loved and cared for. And the people who he wrote to knew that full well. And when they received the letter as many as of them could get together in a place, (just like our life groups) will come together and somebody will read that letter out loud to them. I suggest we just do that.

- 3. Let's read the whole letter** of 1 Peter in one sitting. As we read it, we want to pay attention and make note of things such as:

a) Who are some of the characters in the story? (*Hint: God, the writer, the recipients, husbands, wives . . .*)

b) Key points and themes. The reality of suffering and how to respond to it is the underlying theme. But what other key points do you notice in this book? **Hint:** Look for repeated words or phrases, look for points that are emphasized.

4. **Let's focus on the writer** of this letter, the Apostle Peter. We heard some useful information about him in the sermon. Let's read about some of the encounters he had to know him a bit better.

a) Matthew 4:18-20 records his calling by Jesus Christ. What are some of the things you observe?

*(Hint: Peter immediately leaves whatever he is doing and follows after Jesus. Also, you can ask what does the "leaving of his net" means, which of course means he gave up his job and source of income and support).*

How is Peter's invitation by Jesus to follow Him is the same or different from your personal encounter with Jesus?

If you have heard Jesus' invitation and have not accepted it, what is stopping you?

b) Peter was part of a group of 12 men who Jesus personally called to follow Him. Jesus poured His life into them for 3 1/2 years in order to model discipleship. It was though the day to day mentoring of Jesus Christ and interaction of the Disciples within that small group (may I call it life group) that their lives changed. They were not perfect but it was though these changed lives and the ones who they influence later that God turned the world upside down.

How do you see your life group working in a similar way influencing your life?

5. **Who is Peter writing to?** Who are the original audience?

Are there any modern examples comparable to the original audience?

**(Hint:** Believers who have to flee from the country because of persecution; refugees and asylum seekers)

Obviously, we are not living in any of those provinces of Asia Minor and it is not 60 AD and our country is not governed by a Roman Emperor. Then the question is how does this letter applies to me living in the province of BC in the country of Canada in 2018 under the Liberal party as our government? What are some similarities between then and there and here and now?

- 6. Peter is writing this letter** to a group of people who he dearly loves and deeply care for. But as in any of the books or letters in the New Testament, the writer in this case Peter is writing to address an issue. Peter (who looked so much like Pastor Kevin) referred to it very clearly on his message to us on Sunday:

**The first letter God used me to write to the churches was largely about how to understand, respond and grow through suffering.**

Did you see that theme in the letter as we read it together?

In his book, "The Problem of Pain", C. S. Lewis writes, "Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself".

All of us have experienced, are experiencing or will experience pain, hurt and suffering in our lives at one point. Probably the one thing that all humanity have in common is the issue of pain and suffering. As a matter of a fact our entrance into this world is marked by pain. And yet we struggle so much with that reality. Just go to a drug store and there are shelves filled with all kind of medicine that reduces all kinds of pain.

a) Why do you think is the reason that we all have this negative outlook and response to pain?

On Sunday we heard: **Suffering is quite often the only way God can get our attention.**

In line with that truth, C.S. Lewis writes: *"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."*

b) What do you think about these statements? Do you have any personal experience that you would be open to share that confirms this truth?

We also heard this statement in the sermon: **In fact, sometimes suffering is not only a part of his [God's] plan, it's the center of His plan.**

c) How do you think the outside world reacts to such a statement?

How do you react to this statement? Can you agree and accept that pain and suffering is central to God's plan in our lives?

7. **It may be a good idea to divide into groups of 3 or 4** and pray about the things God have spoken to you.