

START YOUR TIME with your group with some interaction.

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

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.

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? (*Eg. 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? 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?

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 through 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 through 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?

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 apply 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 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. Let's spend some time in prayer.

.