

Victorious Living, Anyway!

St. Luke Lutheran Church
Spring, 2008
Home Group Discussion #3

Lessons from the Apostle Peter: To God's Elect, Strangers in the World

*Peter before the Sanhedrin,
"Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.
For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."
Acts 4:19-20*

Our spring home group sessions continue the study of Peter's first letter to the early Church scattered throughout what is now Turkey. Peter wrote during a time of increasing animosity toward the church, and outright persecution was looming. Peter encouraged his readers to remain steadfast... no matter what. The format of this study will be different from previous studies: a series of leading questions will lead participants through a verse by verse discussion of I Peter.

A second feature of our spring home group sessions is a reinforcement of our purposes as a congregation:

Worship: live to please God
Fellowship: be connected into God's family
Discipleship: become like Jesus
Ministry: serve others
Evangelism: share Jesus

Each session will call on participants to evaluate our progress individually and corporately in fulfilling these purposes.

OPENING:

Share with one another something that you appreciate about spring.

Have someone lead the group in a prayer. Make sure to ask God to grant his blessing on the entire home group ministry. Also ask him to bless the ministry life of the congregation.

MINISTRY: Serve others

A church bulletin has the following heading:

Pastor of St. John's by the Lake:	The Rev. Jim Smith
Ministers of St. John's by the Lake:	All the Members

Back in the 70's a book entitled Everyone a Minister swept through the church. It accented the point that just like a body is connected in a way that each body part (member) must work with all the other body parts, so in a congregation all the members need to be serving one another. Paul said in I Corinthians 12, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Discuss how your ministry is going:

- Are you finding places in the congregation where you can serve in a meaningful way? Do you have joy in the serving that you are doing?
- Are others finding places to be involved in meaningful ministry? How are we doing at building a culture of joyful ministry in the congregation?

STUDY OF I PETER 3:1-4:6

This letter was written by the Apostle Peter in about A.D. 64. Peter, one of the closest associates of Jesus and a leader in the early Christian Church, addresses the reality of suffering and persecution for the church and the need to remain steadfast. Hope in Christ is hope enough!

READ 3:1-7

Peter addressed new life in Christ lived out in a hostile world. He called Christians to live such dramatically different lives that people see them and are drawn to Christ. In chapter 2 he spoke to “work” relationships; here he speaks about relationships in the home.

This is the kind of passage that irks many inside as well as outside the church. Why do these words offend? What does it mean to submit to your own husband? What does it not mean? How might this passage be freeing for women?

What does this have to say about men and their prayer life?

READ 3:8-22

Discuss how verses 8-9 call for a dramatically different kind of life as the Church. Consider this statement, “The Church should spend as much time focusing on good Christian behavior as it does on good Christian doctrine.”

What does Peter mean when he uses the word “good?” What does he mean when he uses the word “suffer?”

Fear motivates much in life. Discuss things that non-Christians fear that Christians don’t. What things should Christians fear?

What does it mean to “set apart Christ as Lord?”

Peter tells us that we will not be harmed if we focus on living a good life. Then he concedes that in fact we might suffer for doing what is good. Have there been times in life where you suffered for doing what was good?

Often John 3:16 is described as the Gospel in a nutshell. Compare John 3:16 with I Peter 3:18.

Jesus lived a good life. So did Noah. How did it work out for them? Consider this statement, “The protection that adheres to a good life precedes the behavior. It grows out of relationship not obedience.”

READ 4:1-6

Peter begins to flesh out the impact of what he said in 3:18. What does it mean “to arm yourselves also with the same attitude (as Christ)?” “Fitting in” proves a powerful force. How willing are we to live in a way that others “think strange?”

AND SO...

What will you take home from tonight’s conversation? What do you need to pray and think about? What do you need to put into practice?

CLOSING:

Have the group spend some time in prayer. Pray for a greater willingness toward serving and a greater commitment toward living as aliens in a strange world.