



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

LifeGroup

May 19, 2024
1 Peter 1:13-21

Community

TODAY'S THEME

This week we'll read through two books attributed to the apostle Peter. Jesus himself gave this man the name Cephas, or "Rock," which seems ironic when we consider the relative unsteadiness of this disciple. This week, we'll examine both of Peter's letters, and discover that 1st Peter seeks to encourage the church at a time when persecution is imminent, and 2nd Peter calls the early church back to purity of faith and practice.

Peter is a great example of someone who is completely human: both frail and flawed, yet remaining faithful through the most difficult circumstances. He experiences everything from the trial and crucifixion of Jesus to the birth of the early church. We have much to learn from this revered apostle.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO KNOW?

We want our group participants to know what motivates us to excel, the goal the church is aiming for, and the power by which we are able to live the life that God is calling us to.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO DO?

God is calling us to identify at least one area of our lives in which we are conformed to the ways of culture; anything that is out of sync with God's agenda of love, mercy, justice and peace. We want to confess it, repent, and rely upon God's grace to align our hearts, minds, hands, feet and mouths.

ICEBREAKER

Read an excerpt from the song *Pressure* by Billy Joel:

I'm sure you'll have some cosmic rationale
But here you are in the ninth
Two men out and three men on
Nowhere to look but inside
Where we all respond to
Pressure.

All your life is *Time Magazine*
I read it, too
What does it mean?
Pressure.

I'm sure you'll have some cosmic rationale
But here you are with your faith

And your Peter Pan advice
You have no scars on your face
And you cannot handle pressure
Pressure.
One, two, three, four, pressure.

Are you being pressured anywhere in your life right now? Where is the pressure coming from? How does it affect you?

INTRODUCTION

Who is St. Peter, and why is he important?

Simon Peter (1 B.C. – A.D. 67), sometimes called Simon Cephas, was the son of John, from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee. He and his brother, Andrew, were two of Jesus' twelve disciples. As a disciple, Peter was one of just a few witnesses to key events in Jesus' life, such as the transfiguration. He became a leader of the early Christian church, and he is featured prominently in the gospels and the book of Acts. He wrote 1st and 2nd Peter, as well as the gospel of Mark, before he was martyred by Nero.

Read Matthew 16:16-18.

DISCUSSION

What do you think Jesus meant by saying "and on this rock I will build my church?" What kind of pressure do you think Peter felt in his life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Father God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, motivate us by reminding us of the great hope we have in believing your good news. Set us apart for the new purposes you have for each one of us in the work of your kingdom. Teach us how to rely on your Holy Spirit to guide and empower us so we can face the pressures and struggles of life. Keep us from conforming to the pressures around us. Help us to be agents of your transformation every day in Jesus' name. Amen.

Content

Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.

THE MOTIVATION:

Peter knows the single-minded focus and discipline needed for the church to be bold when it is threatened with destruction. He addresses the inheritance we have in Christ. It won't perish, spoil, or fade, and it's guarded by the greatest power in the universe. This

wonderful gift starts within us, as God fills us with inexpressible joy as a down payment on the salvation of our souls, which is our promised future in Christ. That redemption is the great motivation of a Christian's life, and sustains us through hardship.

DISCUSSION What motivates you? Where does the drive and passion to excel come from? Why is motivation an important part of spiritual discipline for Christians?

THE GOAL:

This great promise of salvation doesn't come from bartered goods and services that will be discarded or used up. It came about because God gave his own blood so we can be forgiven. It is this knowledge that also motivates us as Christians to not conform to evil desires or live in the empty ways we see modeled around us. It makes us *want* to be holy – set apart and living for God.

DISCUSSION What do you think it means to be holy? What are some living, breathing examples of holiness around you?

THE POWER:

You might say, “that sounds great, but how will I ever get the ability and power to actually live my life that way?” We don't do this on our own strength – it requires the Holy Spirit within us to guide, forgive, and empower us, and to help us face the trials and struggles in our own lives.

DISCUSSION How does the Holy Spirit guide you? How does the Holy Spirit give you the ability and power to live for God? Talk about a time when you believe the Holy Spirit helped you face the trials and struggles of your life.

GOING DEEPER

In his plan for action, Peter says:

- Prepare your minds for action.
- Be self-controlled.
- Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.
- Be holy in all you do.

DISCUSSION

What specific thing can you do to prepare your mind for action? What areas in your life need self-control? On what are you pinning your hopes? In what ways do you conform to evil desires? What does living for God look like?

Application

God's agenda includes love, mercy, justice, and peace. This week, identify one area of your life in which you are conformed to the ways of culture and out of sync with God's agenda of love, mercy, justice and peace. After you identify it, confess it, repent, and rely on God's grace to align your heart, mind, hands, feet, and mouth.

PRAY TOGETHER

God, we want our agenda to align with your agenda. We want to engage in things that matter to you. We admit that we are out of sync with your dreams for the world and we want to change. By the power of your Holy Spirit, work in us this week to align our hearts, minds, hands, feet, and mouths to your hopes and dreams for the world. Amen.

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION AND REFLECTION

Promises

2 Peter 1:3-4

2 Peter contains a great set of verses that every disciple should know about. 2 Peter 1:3-4 reads: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Throughout the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, Jesus and other authors give us promises from God that can become great builders of faith. For example, Paul says: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Or “If God is for me, then who can be against me?” Many early Christian catechisms had people memorize these great promises, because they become hope and faith builders in times of doubt, temptation, and suffering. Perhaps your group can share the promises that have meant the most over the years, and try to memorize at least one of them.

1 Peter 1:13-21 NLT So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. (14) So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. (15) But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. (16) For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." (17) And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as "temporary residents." (18) For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. (19) It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. (20) God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. (21) Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.