

MY STORY – WEEK 2

TALK SUMMARY:

1 & 2 Peter were written to followers of Jesus living in the northern areas of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). These were people facing an increasing amount of hostility and harassment from their Greek and Roman neighbors.

During this time, the disciple Peter writes two letters to encourage followers of Jesus to stand strong and remain hopeful in the midst of what they were experiencing.

As motivation, Peter continually reminds his readers that they have been marked by God and set apart for his purposes.

This is important, because knowing who we are should impact our behavior!

Of course, it's hard to stand strong when life is falling apart, so Peter reminds his readers that God's Spirit was actively at work in their life making them holy... separating their old life from their new life. This is a lifelong process.

Peter goes on to acknowledge the difficulties these first century believers were going through and explained that even in suffering we can remain hopeful because we serve a living God, this life is temporary, and eventually God will make all things new.

Additionally, Peter wants his readers to know that trials can serve a purpose:

1. They can reveal our faith.
2. They can make us stronger.

CHOOSE THE QUESTIONS YOU FEEL FIT BEST WITH YOUR GROUP
(IT'S NOT NECESSARY TO GO THROUGH ALL OF THEM)

1. What is your favorite fall food, drink, or treat?
2. It's impossible to understand the persecution first century Jesus followers, living in the Roman Empire, experienced.

Other than people disagreeing with you on issues that could be categorized as "political", can you think of any time you have truly faced opposition or discrimination because of your faith?

3. Open Doors USA, a credible organization that shines a spotlight on Christian persecution around the world, says their research reveals that almost 400 Jesus followers a month are violently killed because of their faith.

How do you imagine the threat of imprisonment, torture, or death would impact your faith or openness about your faith?

4. Early on in his letter, Peter writes... "God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy..." (1 Peter 1:2)

Obviously these first century followers of Jesus were nowhere close to perfect, but Peter is telling his readers that God's sees them as holy (pure, set apart, sacred) because of Jesus' death on the cross.

The work that the Holy Spirit does in us is a lifelong process of separating our old life from our new life. This isn't simply about us stopping bad habits and starting good habits... it's about us growing in our ability to transfer confidence from ourselves to God. In other words...

- It's becoming more and more free from the impossible burden of feeling like we have to earn God's love and acceptance.
- It's embracing the reality that the sins we cannot forget, God chooses not to remember.
- It's believing that who we are is determined by God and not by our accomplishments, failures, strengths or weaknesses.
- It's finding freedom to admit when we're wrong, because we have nothing to prove since we already know we're fully accepted by God.
- It's finding the strength to love others, without needing them to love us in return... because that's what Jesus has done for us.

For you personally, can you think of some distinct differences between your "old life" and "new life"? In other words, what are some ways God has changed you since you started following Jesus?

5. On several occasions in his letter, Peter encourages his readers to obey Jesus even when it's difficult. In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to obey Jesus? Why?
6. The books of 1 & 2 Peter were written to followers of Jesus who were feeling hopeless because of persecution. How do you typically cope when you feel hopeless?
7. Describe a time where one of these two statements were true for you?
 - Trials can reveal our faith.
 - Trial can make us stronger.
8. Here are the verses from this week's talk from a paraphrase Bible called *The Message*. What statement do you need to be reminded of the most?

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole.

I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it proved pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out proved genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it's your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of his victory.

You never saw him, yet you love him. You still don't see him, yet you trust him—with laughter and singing. Because you kept on believing, you'll get what you're looking forward to: total salvation. 1 Peter 1:3-9