

Discussion questions based on 2 Peter 1v1-21

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The focus in this sermon is on remembering, and this was important for Peter: *“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.”* 2 Peter 3v1

Introduction

Read 2 Peter 1 v 1-11

Peter reminds his readers:

v1-4: God has provided everything necessary for living a godly life, such as faith, grace and peace.

v5-7: Pursue the path of discipleship by making every effort to add to your faith qualities such as goodness and perseverance, kindness and love.

v8-11: The benefits of the pursuit of holiness are to know Jesus more deeply and that you are forgiven, that you will not stumble and will be welcomed into the kingdom of God.

Read 2 Peter 1v 12-21

Soon Peter will no longer be with them (v14) because his life is coming to an end. Add to this his concern from the threat of heresy by false teachers who were downplaying the sovereignty of Jesus, and also false prophets (v20-21), no wonder he wants ‘refresh their memory’ (v13) of ‘these things’, a phrase that refers to his teaching in v1-11.

v12-15: Peter reminds his readers of the truths they have already learnt.

Note the three different versions of the word ‘remember’ in v12, v13, v15.

v16: Peter reminds them of the certainty of the New Testament.

He speaks of the authority of scripture and its importance as God’s final revelation.

Peter refers to the transfiguration (v16-18), for catching a glimpse of the glory of Jesus causes all doubts about Jesus’ sovereignty to pale into insignificance.

v19-21, Peter reminds them of the reliability of the OT prophetic message.

Peter wants to ‘refresh their memory’ (v13) of what is important to enable them to stand firm in the faith, and knowing he was soon to die focussed his mind on what he had to pass on.

In April last year I had a heart attack followed by a triple bypass operation, and in the same way, this focussed my mind and led me to consider afresh how to ensure my faith stays strong and I remain resilient.

In my sermon, I shared 5 key elements of faith that are important to pass on.

Focus on gratitude

Ask the right question

Identify how Jesus is revealing himself

Turn to others for support

Hold on to the cross

For your discussion, here are 3 to consider:

1. Focus on gratitude

Key verse:

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5v18

A focus on gratitude is not always easy, but gratitude changes your feeling state from spiralling fear as you look at an unknown future, to one of safety and comfort in recognising and fully embracing what you have.

Discussion:

At the end of each day in hospital, I reflected on this question: *'What am I thankful for today?'* In a few moments of quiet, consider this question, and then share your answers.

Prayer:

Invite each person to pray aloud and give thanks to God for his goodness. Start each prayer with the words: 'Thank you Lord for'

2. Ask the right questions

Key verse:

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose. Philippians 2 v12-13

In difficult times, it is so easy to ask the wrong questions. *Why me, Lord? Why at this time? Why did you allow this? What have I done wrong?* These questions are unhelpful and unsettling.

Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi, tells us the right question to ask:

Each of us is here for a reason, to do something only we can do. Pain and heartbreak are bearable if we can discern God's purpose or hear, however muffled, His call. In a crisis, the wrong question to ask is, "What have I done to deserve this?" The right one is, "What am I now being summoned to do?" Each of us has a task. Every life has a purpose. We can bear the pain of the past when we discover the future we are called on to make.

Discussion:

Share your reflections on the right question to ask: *"What am I now being summoned to do?"*

Prayer:

In a time of prayer, offer what emerges from your discussion to the Lord.

3. Turn to others for support

Key verse:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1 v3-4

Tough times can knock the stuffing out of us, so whatever it is we are going through, be it illness, sadness, distress or something else, we need the support, love and prayers from our church family.

Discussion:

Do you find asking others for help easy or difficult? If this is hard, why do you think this is so? In what ways have you been supported by your brothers and sisters at Emmanuel?

Prayer:

In prayer, give thanks to God for the people who have been a blessing in your life.