

FEARLESS

Choosing Sides

February 17/18, 2018

1 Peter 3:8-18

Peter wrote his letter to young Christians to help them see how they should live as followers of Jesus within a culture where they were looked down upon, ostracized and potentially even faced the loss of their lives. How do you live in that kind of environment? There are Christians in many parts of the world today who are answering this exact question. Recently, we've heard from ministry partners in India that anti-Christian persecution is being ramped up. Even though it is officially illegal, it is being overlooked and even celebrated by the authorities. In spite of this, they are looking for ways to bless those around them. History shows us that the church often is at its best when it is facing this kind of trouble.

Sermon Notes:

Welcome

- Introduce anyone new to the group.
- Icebreaker: The world is changing so quickly! What's one thing you thought was really fun when you were a kid that now seems kind of lame? Or that kids today would find boring?

Opening Prayer (Don't Skip This!)

Ask God to prepare your hearts for what he wants to teach you. Pray that each person would believe that God wants to speak to him or her over the coming hour. Pray that each person would listen and hear.

Vision

In our services this weekend, we mentioned that Thursday, February 22, is "Shine a Light on Slavery" day. This is an opportunity to highlight the issue of modern slavery and sex trafficking (see enditmovement.com). One of the partners of this day is the International Justice Mission. IJM and other partners not only raise awareness, but they are actively seeking ways to find justice and freedom for those who are victims of modern slavery. If you would like some information to share with your group as you pray for release of these captives, visit ijm.org/slavery.

Look Back

- How have you seen God at work around you over the past week?
- Did you follow through on a step of obedience from the group's last meeting?
- Have you shared your story or God's story recently? How did it go?

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Look Up

- As Peter wrote to these Christians who are living as “exiles and aliens” and facing persecution, must have been thinking of Jesus’ words, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” He reminds them that if they suffer as followers of Jesus, they are in the good hands of a Father who loves them.
- In our passage, Peter quotes part of a psalm written by David. Psalm 34 was written in thanks to God, because he delivered David from a dangerous situation. Peter is reminding us that our job, in times of persecution, is not to hunker down. It’s not to stand up for our rights. Instead, it’s to live with love – and actually be a blessing to those who persecute us.
- Read through 1 Peter 3:8-18 several times as a group.

What do you like or not like from these passages? What is challenging or difficult to understand?

- Why do you think Peter focuses so much on how Christians are to live their lives in a hostile culture, rather than how to escape or avoid persecution? Does this help explain why Christians around the world who are facing these troubles rarely ask for prayers of deliverance, but rather that they would be faithful in the midst of suffering?
- What does Peter write that can help us live fearless lives, even when those lives are being threatened?

- One of the main ideas from this weekend’s message is to be ready to tell others why we are Christians. Have you ever had someone ask you about the reason for the hope you have? If a neighbor were to ask you that this week, how would you answer?

What does this passage say about God? What does it say about us?

- It can be our tendency to be self-focused when we are suffering. What does Peter say in this passage that pulls us outside of ourselves and to have a focus on the needs of others, even when life hurts.
- What kinds of things can we do that would cause people around us to ask us about the hope we have as Christians?

Look Ahead

- Take a few minutes for silent prayer before Looking Ahead.
- What is one way you can obey this passage?
- Who can you share this passage with? What, specifically, do you think you should tell them?
- Be specific and pray for one another, that God would open the right doors for each conversation to take place.