

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MYSTERY OF MERCY: A SERIES IN 1 PETER

April 16, 2023

MYSTERY OF MERCY

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you *think more deeply* about the sermon and *engage with others* through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and *allow God to work* in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is one thing you started doing during the pandemic that you still do now?

➤ EXPLORATION

This week we begin our new sermon series on the book of 1 Peter. For the next 5 weeks we will cover one chapter each week. This may be a familiar book to many of us. At the beginning of the Pandemic we had a sermon series on the books of 1 & 2 Peter. Now, 3 years later, we return to these books to look back and assess whether or not we have grown.

Whether this is a review for you or your first time through these important books, there is so much for us to learn together.

1 Peter 1:1-2 (From your bible, read aloud)

Notice in verse 1, that Peter refers to his audience as **exiles**, people who have been scattered throughout the region. This book was likely written 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus and life for Christians was difficult.

Believers were scattered because their choice to follow Jesus meant that they no longer fit in with the values of the world. The same holds true today.

1 Peter 1:3 (From your bible, read aloud)

The word used here for mercy is *eleos* - which means kindness or goodwill toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to help them.

Grace: God giving us what we do not deserve

Mercy: God not giving us what we do deserve

Why is the subtle distinction between Grace and Mercy so important?

God shows us grace and mercy in so many ways.

1 Peter 1:4-7 (From your bible, read aloud)

What God Has Done

- Chosen his people
- Given new birth
- Given an inheritance
- Shielded us by his power

The promises of heaven help us persevere in the pains of earth. When life is difficult, we have to choose how we will respond. What we think about our suffering is important as we process what we are feeling. When we recognize that suffering is part of any normal life, we can turn to God for strength as we endure the pain rather than becoming angry about our circumstances.

“I repent of the jadedness and cynicism, making the choice to believe my beliefs more than my doubts, and to doubt my doubts more than my beliefs.”

~Pete Grieg, *Lectio 365*

What cynicism or doubts are holding you back from trusting God completely?

“God, save me, save me, save me. And, God, if you don’t, love me through.”

~Kate Bowler, *The Lives We Actually Have*

1 Peter 1:13 (From your bible, read aloud)

So let’s look at how we can stay alert:

WHAT DO WE DO?

- **Set Our Hope On Christ’s Grace**
 - Moving from “hopefully?”
 - Moving to HOPE-FULLY!

How would your life change if you were truly “full” of hope?

When our hope is set on Jesus we can live in full confidence because of God’s grace.

WHAT DO WE DO?

- Set Our Hope On Christ’s Grace
- **Be Holy In All We Do**

This doesn’t mean that we will be without sin, it means that our holiness is the work of God in our lives. When we think about holiness, there are two extreme attitudes that we need to be careful to avoid:

- I am so bad (I can do no good)
- I am so saved (I can do no wrong)

Neither of these represents true holiness. We are invited to humbly embrace God’s forgiveness in order to walk in holiness. We are then able to extend God’s forgiveness to others and walk in peace.

Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive?

Take some time to share and pray, asking God to help you forgive others the way you have been forgiven.

1 Peter 1:17 (From your bible, read aloud)

WHAT DO WE DO?

- Set Our Hope On Christ’s Grace
- Be Holy In All We Do
- **Live Out Our Time In Reverent Fear**

Reverent fear is not the paralyzing version of fear that makes us unable to cope, to process correctly or make wise decisions. Reverent fear is simply a deep respect for the holiness of God.

Why is the difference between general fear and reverent fear important for us to understand?

1 Peter 1:22 (From your bible, read aloud)

WHAT DO WE DO?

- Set Our Hope On Christ’s Grace
- Be Holy In All We Do
- Live Out Our Time In Reverent Fear
- **Love One Another Deeply**

Peter has written this letter to exiles, people who were thrown out of their communities and persecuted because of their faith. And here in verse 22 he tells them to “...*have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.*” This is not a casual suggestion. Sincere love comes as a result of obeying the truth. We cannot love fully without a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus.

Are you being fully obedient to the truth in every area of your life? Where do you need help?

➤ TAKE AWAY

3 years ago the world shut down. As you look back, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you more connected to Christ than you were then?
- Are you more in alignment with his ways and his words than you were then?
- Are you filled with more hope than you were before?
- Are you walking in holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit?
- Are you loving more deeply and radically?

Share your responses and Pray together, that God would fill you with hope as you follow him this week.