

Everyday Church

Reflection

Take time together to read 1 Peter 1v3-9.

As you read reflect on who Christ is and the salvation we have received through him. Respond by praising and giving thanks to God.

Everyday Pastoral Care

Read 1 Peter 1v22-2v3, 4v7-11

Out side the family

The letter of 1 Peter has shown us right from the beginning that as Christians we live life on the margins. Because of our new faith in Christ we have been pushed out and excluded - we no longer 'fit in'. Those that Peter wrote to experienced this in a very real way. He writes to those who are '*strangers in the world, scattered throughout the world..*' 1v1. Literally they were pushed out of their homes and towns and had to settle elsewhere. Many had to leave families as they were disowned and excluded.

This is the experience of many Christians today. In countries that are closed to Christ, Christians are marginalised. Excluded from the community and isolated by their family. For us it might not be as extreme but we still face life on the margins. Our community and our own families can leave us with a real sense of being on the outside.

Part of the family

Being a Christian may result in being pushed outside society and the family, but being a Christian means we become part of a bigger community and a greater family.

Peter is quick to point out that while we are scattered and feel strangers in this world we can look forward to our '*..inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you..*'. 1v4

But not only do we have an eternal home to look forward to we have a family to care for us today.

We are reminded that we are 'strangers' 1v1,17 and 'aliens' 2v11. Literally it means to be without home or without family. In other words when we become Christians, when we find new life in Christ we become un-family. But coming to Christ means we are born into a new family.

We become part of a loving family that is marked by '*sincere love and loves one another deeply from the heart*' 1v22. We are also welcomed into a new home that we belong to '*..like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house..*' 2v5.

So while being a Christian means we feel outside the family we also become part of a great family – the people of God.

Question:

In what ways have you experienced God's people as a family?

Gospel Centred Families

As Christians we have been redeemed from one family tradition to another. This happens not because of our desire or our commitment but because of the gospel at work in our lives.

The Gospel creates the family.

1 Peter 1v22 reminds us of what God's family looks like. *'Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth for a sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.* But it's the next verse that tells us how this family love came about. *'For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.'* 1v23.

The important word is 'For'. It connects the loving family with the living word. We only love one another because we have been born again by God's word the gospel. The gospel is what creates the family. Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains: *'When God had mercy on us, when God revealed Jesus Christ to us as our brother, when God won our hearts by God's own love, our instruction in Christian love began at the same time'*. When we are born again by the gospel word we are enabled to love as Christ loved us.

The Gospel keeps the family.

Physically we are born by a perishable seed. We are born we live and we die. Spiritually however we born again *'..not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.'* 1v23.

The gospel word at work in our lives means it lasts, it endures it will never die. Peter contrasts our physical life with the lasting word of God in the following verse. *'For all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.'* 1v24.

Timmis and Chester comment: *Because the word is imperishable the family is imperishable. We have been born into this family through an imperishable word, so it is an imperishable family. Human families will perish because they break up through conflict or become separated through death. But our new family endures. You will always have Christians to stand by you.... You should not, will not, become 'un-family'. While the word of other people is perishable and their loyalty is fleeting, loyalty in the family of God is lasting because we are bound together by the imperishable Word.*

The Gospel grows the family.

The gospel word not only creates us and keeps us it will also grow us as a family. Because of what we are - a loving enduring family - we are encouraged to deepen the love we have for each other. The means of doing this is by the gospel. *'Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind. Like new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.'* 2v1-3

The metaphor has changed from 'imperishable seed' to 'pure spiritual milk' but they are still talking about the same thing – the gospel word. By believing the gospel we have already 'tasted that the Lord is good' so the encouragement is to receive more of God in the gospel. This will cause us to get rid of all the things that break the family – deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander – and in turn cause us to grow up in our salvation. As we crave Christ and his gospel so we will become more like Christ in our love for each other.

Question:

How do we measure up to being a Gospel centred family? What areas do we need to work on?

Pastoring the Family

The gospel, God's word, is central to the family of God. It is the means by which it is created, how it is kept and how it will grow. The implication then is that we continue to speak this gospel into each others lives as an expression of our love for each other. We can call this

everyday pastoral care.

Pastoral care is not the sole responsibility of the Pastor or Minister, in fact the pastor needs pastored as much as every one else! The bible makes it very clear that we are all to pastor one another, to love and care for each other.

First we pastor one another in everyday life.

The family of God functions a bit like any domestic family that includes parents and children. As you go through life together parents teach, encourage and rebuke their children. Sometimes it is done formally other times informally. Parents help their children to live life in the world. In much the same way God's family are called to do the same. We are to teach, encourage and rebuke each other as we seek to live as God's people in the world.

Timmis and Chester comment:

The context for pastoral care is everyday life. It takes place as we do chores, watch TV, go to work, eat meals and do a dozen other things. It's about asking someone about their walk with the Lord while you do the dishes together, sharing a car ride to the shops and talking about how the Spirit has spoken to you through God's word. It's about having people in your home and them seeing how you parent your children. It's about walking the dog together and discovering a pastoral need as you chat. It's about pausing in the supermarket to pray when you learn of a need. It's about having people live with you in your home.

There is no distinction between sacred times and secular times. Every time is an opportunity to pastor each other.

Second we pastor one another with the gospel.

The gospel means 'good news', so as we teach encourage and rebuke each other it should be good news to each other. The gospel of Jesus Christ is one of forgiveness, hope and grace so as we pastor each other we should leave filled with forgiveness hope and grace.

Timmis and Chester comment:

What we do need is gospel intentionality. Ordinary life with gospel intentionality is all well and good, but if you take out the gospel intentionality then all you have is ordinary life – and everyone does that! We need Christian families who saturate ordinary life with the gospel. We want God-Talk to be normal – talking about what we are reading in the Bible, praying together whenever we share needs, delighting together in the gospel, sharing our spiritual struggles – with both Christians and unbelievers.

Questions:

In 1 Peter 4v8-10 we are given a picture of the Christian family in operation:

'Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in it's various forms.'

What will it mean to pastor each other in these contexts?

In what areas of everyday life can I be intentional with the gospel?

Response.

Pray through what we have learned and pray that our friends and community will come to Christ.