

2 Peter 1:1-12 Running in the Darkness Sermon-based Discussion Leader's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To understand sanctification in such a way so as to be more motivated to take steps of growth personally.

Sermon Refresher: Fighting against what God is trying to do in our lives only leads us to frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. God's will is that we be sanctified which means to be made holy. Our commitment to sanctification is crucial because it's about becoming more and more like God. We all long for holiness, but are tricked into thinking we don't. Jesus breaks our enslavement to sin when we trust in him so that now we are free to grow into his likeness more and more.

Icebreaker: When is a time in your life when you were literal darkness or the lack of lights posed a problem for you?

Discussion:

1. Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. In verse 4, Peter describes the location of where the race of our life is, when he says "having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." He later refers to this world as "a dark place" (1:19). What does this tell us about the difficulty of our race?
2. What negative connotations come to mind when you think of someone becoming "holy"? What are some other ways we might be tricked to stay in darkness?
3. Read 2 Peter 1:5-12. Where in these verses do you see a mention of a definitive past work in a Christian's life? Where do you see a mention of an ongoing needed response by a Christian?

Digging Deeper (Optional) 1: Read 1 John 2:18-19 and James 2:14-18. How do these verses unpack the connection between our ongoing response and the validity of that definitive past work?

Digging Deeper (Optional) 2: Read Romans 6 1-23. How is the grace we are shown to us when we first believe in Jesus not just an excuse to indulge our worst vices?

4. In answering the question “what is the actual running part of our race?”, Dave referenced verses 5-7 that our part is to make every effort to live a life of increasing faith, goodness, knowledge of God/Jesus, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. Dave also mentioned that these are all aspects of what we call “our sanctification” or being made holy. Which of those characteristics do you feel you need to grow in? What does it look like to make every effort?
5. How would your life be better if those characteristics were more true of you than they currently are?
6. Relook at verses 3-4. Where does the ability to grow in these characteristics come from? How does that change the way we approach sanctification?

Set up this week’s exercise: Peter tells us that we grow in holiness through his very great and precious promises. This week’s exercise is meant to explore how a deeper understanding of what God promises us moves us to fight sin and unbelief and to grow more and more into God’s likeness.

7. Read again verse 8. What does it mean that these traits should be “in our possession in increasing measure”? What is comforting and challenging about that?

Sharing and Prayer: Break into smaller groups. Have everyone share a trait that they wish was more true of them in this stretch of his or her life than it is now. Pray for each other in light of what was shared.

2 Peter 1:4- His Very Great and Precious Promises

“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

-2 Peter 1:4

Far too often, we try to grow in the Christian life by motivating ourselves with duty, guilt, or a debtor’s ethic. “If I really loved God, I would...”, “Jesus did so much to save me, how can I not...”, “A Christian should...”, or other phrases like these can express these sub-motivations. This is not how the Bible primarily motivates us to live the Christian life.

The Bible’s motivation is God’s continued grace he offers us in Christ: power to do the hard thing, wisdom to see the world rightly, and the hope of why it’s worth it. Growth does not occur as we now do our part, but only as we live in more and more dependence upon God. We find these grace motivations in the form of promises in the Bible. As we believe more in these promises, we live in more and more dependence upon God, and we grow more and more into the people that He is calling us to be.

Our hope for this exercise is that it’s not just a one-time devotional thought, but a tool to believe more deeply a promise of God that applies to an area of frequent struggle or sin. Perhaps, you can even copy the promise on a notecard, stickypad, or a note on your phone this week to equip you to fight the fight of faith this week.

But, the first step is being willing to expose our areas of weakness, unbelief, and sin. Spend a minute asking God to search your heart:

*“Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Psalm 139:23-24

What area of life is God pointing out where he is wanting you to grow?

What are the beliefs that are underlying your area of weakness or sin? What is being “promised” to me? What desires am I experiencing that make this sin enticing?

What does God promise us instead? Sometimes, it's hard to know. See below for some common areas of sin and promises to fight with. Or is there another verse that applies?

How is what God is promising better and more satisfying than what sin is promising me?

What would your life look like if you believed more and more in that promise?

Anxiety

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God

-Philippians 4:6

My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

-Philippians 4:19

Greed

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper;

I will not fear;

What can man do to me?"

-Hebrews 13:5-6

Feelings of Inadequacy for Ministry/Service

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

-Colossians 1:29

Lust

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

-Matthew 5:8

Grumbling/Complaining About Circumstances

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether

well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
-Philippians 4:11-13

Bitterness

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
-Romans 12:19

Impatience

*The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;*
-Lamentations 3:25

Fear of Death

We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
-2 Corinthians 5:8

Facing Hardships/Suffering

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.
-Romans 5:1-4

Sorrow/Grief

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*
-Psalm 34:18

Guilt

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
-1 John 1:9

Lack of Love for God

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

-Ezekiel 36:26

Fear

*So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

-Isaiah 41:10

Comparison/Judging Others

3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

-1 Corinthians 4:3-5