

Talk It Over

DIFFERENT

(Week 1)

Different Values An Unholy Culture

SMALL TALK

1. Let's get to know each other. Share your name, how long you've been part of this church, and something "different" about you?
2. What did you do in your childhood just to fit in?

VIEWPOINT

3. How would you describe the most important ways God asks us to be different?
4. **READ 1 Peter 1:1-19** What does Peter have to say about being "different"?
5. How does knowing that we are "foreigners" (strangers, exiles, aliens, sojourners) in this world help when we are suffering through trials and difficulties? What are some other encouraging positive points Peter would have us to know and focus on while we "suffer for a little while"? (1:6-9)
6. What is your reaction to the following statement: "Holiness is not something you achieve; it is something you receive by grace through intimacy with Jesus."

GETTING PERSONAL

7. Why do you think it is so easy to start looking like the rest of the world? What areas do you find yourself trying to "fit in" rather than "stand out"? Describe a time you put your happiness above God's call for you to be different? How did it turn out?
8. How can difficulties (trials and suffering) reveal something about your faith?
9. Have you experienced a trial that drew you closer to God? What caused you to move closer to God instead of moving away from Him?

MAKING PROGRESS

10. Being different isn't just subtraction—its addition. What good and godly thing can you add to your week?

July 14, 2019

Different Values In An Unholy Culture

Series: DIFFERENT (Week 1)

This is a challenging series. Just how challenging? Let's read the Series description together:

Series Description

In this world, we will have struggles. We will face opposition. We will be challenged. And there's a reason for that: this world is not our home. Jesus calls us to answer hate with love, find joy in the midst of difficulties, and rely on a strength beyond ourselves. Jesus called us to be ... DIFFERENT.

This series is a 3 week study of 1 Peter an ancient letter written sometime between AD 60 - 65.

Who wrote 1 Peter? Peter. Peter, formerly known as Simon, but Jesus nick named him Cephas, Rock, translated in Greek, Petros, (Peter). He was the leader in Jerusalem early in the movement, but later took his ministry further out to Rome. It was from Rome that he writes this. As he was signing off in the letter he referred to Rome by using a symbolic, and cryptic term, Babylon. Why? A tyrant Roman Emperor was causing all kinds of hardship for Christians. That Emperor's name was Nero.

1 Peter 4:12 (NIV2011) Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

Life as a Christian was becoming increasingly difficult. Now, not just among Jews, but for the non-Jewish believers in the non-Jewish world. Things were really heating up. Remember the word "fiery". We will get back to that, but for now, don't you think

things are heating up for believers all over the world, and even here in our culture?

Before we jump into the letter, let's get some more background.

NERO was a cruel tyrant How cruel? Let's put it this way, he murdered his mother and many other family members to secure his power. His cruelty didn't stop with family members. In May A.D. 64, a terrible fire broke out in Rome. The public believed Nero started the fire. And maybe he did. They knew he wanted a much larger Palace, and a fire gave him more room to build.

Nero attempted to divert the suspicion to another group, a group that was already viewed with suspicion. Here is what Tacitus *a Roman Historian*, wrote in the *Annals of Rome*.

"Hence, to suppress the rumor," says Tacitus, "he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who are hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only throughout Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow, from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly, first three were seized, who confessed they were Christians. Next, on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city as of hating the human race. And in their deaths they were also made the subjects of sport; for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and, when day declined, burned to serve for nocturnal lights. Nero offered his own gardens for that spectacle..."

Peter's letter begins this way.

1 Peter 1:1 (NLT) This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

parepidēmois—exiles, sojourners, aliens, strangers, foreigners.

So, this applies to us very well. Sometimes in our culture we are treated like foreigners or strangers, alien to mainstream culture because our values and beliefs are DIFFERENT. Just like in Rome things are heating up for us too.

So, who is this message for? All of us who have had difficulties, are having difficulties, or will in the future face difficulties. That covers all of us doesn't it? This letter helps us understand how to cope with difficulties and grow in our faith through them.

We are foreigners, sojourners, traveling through. This is NOT our home. We are just passing through to our eternal homes. When we understand who we are, then we can be different. Understanding this is not our home helps us to be different—to love when others hate, to bless those who curse us, to forgive those who harm us. We are different kind of parents, different kind of husbands, different kind of wives. We have different values, because God has made us to be different than those who fit in this world's values and culture.

I. How God uses difficulties...

A. ...to REVEAL your faith

*1 Peter 1:6-7 (NLT) So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. {7} These trials will **show** that your faith is **genuine**. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold...*

If this shows your faith to be GENUINE... It seems that failure here means that it is possible to think you are in the faith, but you don't have the real thing, that "your faith is" NOT "Genuine." It seems to me that it is possible to have a faith that proves to be fake, or false, not made of the real thing? And that is a scary thought. I don't tell you this to frighten you, but to teach and lead you to a strong and GENUINE faith.

Notice what "shows" your faith to be GENUINE. Difficulties! Suffering! Trials! When we trust during these anyway; that's the real thing.

Think of a time when a difficulty revealed the metal of your faith. What kind of faith did it reveal: Did it reveal tin or gold; the real thing, or something fake?

REFLECT:

If your faith is only strong when everything is going your way, what does that reveal?

B. ...to DRAW you CLOSER

1 Peter 1:8 (NLT) You love [God] even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.

GOOD NEWS!

This is the GOSPEL: The good news isn't that he saves you from SUFFERING! The good news is that he saves you from SIN!

REFLECT:

What difficulty are you facing right now? Remember, your faith is not in what you SEE; your faith is in Jesus, who suffered for you and called you to follow him. A decision to trust Him through difficulty will draw you closer and strengthen you, then He can use your experience to strengthen others.

Your faith is not in what you SEE; but in WHO Jesus IS!

II. God Gave You Different VALUES...

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NIV) Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Hágios—holy, set apart, different, pure.

God didn't say your highest calling is to be HAPPY.
Your calling is to be HOLY.
Don't let your desire to be HAPPY undermine your calling to be
HOLY!

Don't deceive yourself thinking that if something makes you HAPPY it must be God's will. Often people choose feelings over God's clear teaching about Christ like character.

BE DIFFERENT. Don't fit in, on purpose! Worry less about what people think and more about what God thinks. *Everyone is somebody's weirdo.* You might as well be the weirdo that always seems to approach life with a purpose, meaning, and joy that doesn't make sense to someone else. Now, I don't mean, make yourself intentionally obnoxious. What I mean is be like Jesus. He loved people in a way that didn't fit the norm. He was a holy nonconformist! Jesus was strange by the world's standards.

- Reject the “Whatever Makes You Happy” approach
- Reject the “Anything Goes” Values of the World
- Choose “Holy” over “Happy” and you will be Happier

III. God's values are FOREIGN to this world

1 Peter 1:17 (NIV) Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

God does not call us to FIT IN,
God calls us to STAND OUT!

1 Peter 1:14 NLT So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. ...

We tend to “slip” into old ways. Nobody “slips” into Holiness. We may fall into temptation, but we never accidentally trip and fall into Holiness.

It takes intentionality. Yet, we always need to remember...

Holiness is not something you ACHIEVE;
it is something you RECEIVE
by grace through intimacy with Jesus.

Dear God,
You are holy; I am not. I need a savior. Jesus, I come to you. I repent and invite you to fill me with more of you. I need your saving grace. I want to be more like You. Wash me clean and fill me with everything I need to be more like you. Jesus, thank You for being with us and for being worth it. Amen.