

4th Sunday of Lent, 22nd March
1st Peter 3:1-12 'Confident in relationships'

1 Peter: Confidence in a Complex World

Confidence in the world is grounded in the gospel and our identity in Christ. The apostle Peter ignites imagination and inspires hope for the possibilities of everyday life in a complex world. This six-session study discovers Peter's trove of wisdom for everyday living. This is a letter that is both exhilarating in its scope and intensely grounded in the grittiness of real life. Like those who first received Peter's letter, you will be challenged to see your daily context afresh and deeply encouraged to live confidently - Monday to Sunday - wherever you are.

1st Peter 3:1-12

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For,

"Whoever would love life

and see good days

must keep their tongue from evil

and their lips from deceitful speech.

They must turn from evil and do good;

they must seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous

and his ears are attentive to their prayer,

but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

First Thoughts

You may be familiar with the TV series, Dragons' Den, in which budding entrepreneurs get three minutes to pitch their business idea to five multi-millionaires potentially willing to invest their own cash. Tone and posture matter. Demanding investment is a sure way to the exit. What's needed is confident, yet humble persuasion.

Yee Kwan had developed a range of quality ice creams, including flavours such as black sesame seed, and lychee. Not only were the customary power dynamics in play, but she was selling products quite different from the norm. Early on in her presentation, Yee gave each Dragon three flavours to sample. Apart from one Dragon, they all loved them. However, the ice cream market is difficult to conquer, and three Dragons declined to invest. But Yee's glorious flavours and winsome

approach persuaded two to make an offer.

Being a Christian in the Roman Empire during the first century required humility and a willingness to embrace weakness. Like selling weird ice cream flavours, it was a major break from the norm. Peter was by no means expecting every person these Christians had contact with to choose to invest their lives in Jesus, but he knew if they could taste and see, some would.

1. Can you think of a time when someone influenced you for the better? What was it about them that made you listen?
2. Imagine you were a Christian woman in Peter's day, and your husband was pagan. What challenges would that pose?
3. What attitudes and actions does Peter ask them to embrace?
4. In verse 7, what does he ask of husbands?
5. How do these virtues foster good relationships?
6. Why does God use people who lack social status, and what does that tell us about God?
7. How can we have confidence when feel we're in a position of social weakness?
8. Why do some (non Christian) people struggle if a close friend is a Christian?
9. Is there a particular relationship on your 'frontline' which is a challenge?
10. How does Peter's call to live in Christ-like relationships challenge or encourage you?

Adam's Story

Most days, Adam's frontline is a workshop. On this particular day, it was clear that his colleague Terry was angry. A steel pole hits the concrete floor. Clang! Followed by a hammer. It was only the two of them in the workshop that day and, under normal circumstances, Adam could have talked Tempestuous Terry down. But this day was not a normal day.

In the weeks leading up to this day, Terry had barely spoken to Adam. The reason for this was Terry had left Adam stranded at a site where they'd been working, meaning Adam got home really late that night. Perhaps unwisely, Adam had sent a sarcastic text, but he was genuinely willing to put the whole thing behind them. Terry was having none of it. What had been a healthy friendship, where Adam had had some great conversations with Terry about Jesus, became a fractured working relationship. Terry would only talk to Adam about work, and only when he had to.

Back to that day in the workshop. Tools and metalwork continued to crash, and Adam prayed. He longed to be a blessing in Terry's life, to be a good friend to him. 'Father, please provide a way for this relationship to be restored.' Within seconds, Adam received the quickest answer to prayer he'd ever experienced . . . and it came in the shape of a 4½ inch aluminium oxide grinding disc. Unaware of Adam's precise location, Terry had flung this CD-sized disc across the room. But instead of smashing

into a wall or machine, it hit Adam straight on the head, resulting instantly in a deep gash. As the blood poured from Adam's temple, Terry rushed over in a state of shock and remorse. 'Are you OK? I'm so sorry! I really didn't mean for that to happen!'

How would Adam respond?

Not in (justified) anger, not in (understandable) retaliation, but with (remarkable) love, Adam reassured Terry that he was fine, that he wasn't angry, and that it was OK. In that instant, all the tension between these workmates dissipated, and within minutes they were both laughing. Neither of them needed to say anything about the previous fall out and the sarcastic text. Conversations about films, family, and faith resumed. A few months down the line, Terry faced a significant health problem. In all the challenges that he and his family faced, Adam was there to walk with them, offering practical support, comfort, and prayer.

Prayer:

1. Thank God that he is able to use you to point other people to himself
2. Think of one 'virtue' that you'd like to grow in
3. Pray for someone close to you who doesn't know Jesus