

The Rector's Summer Challenge

Growing in Hopefulness *Preparing to Share Your Story*

"Simply concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ in your hearts. Be ready at any time to give a quiet and reverent answer to anyone who wants a reason for the hope that you have within you." – I Peter 3:15, J.B. Phillips translation.

Introduction:

The Apostle Peter writes to the churches in Asia Minor during a time of increasing persecution, trials and hardships for the believers. We live in turbulent times ourselves, but nothing like what those first Christians experienced (at least not in America).

There are **two remarkable things** about this verse:

- 1) Peter expects hope within the believers despite their hardships.
- 2) Peter expects that others will notice their hopefulness and ask about it.

=> I'm not sure many today would think of Christians as full of hope. There are lots of other things that people might say about us, but hope is probably not even in the top ten.

We need to recover the hopefulness that those early Christians knew. We need to grow in hopefulness. Take this challenge and I guarantee you will grow in hopefulness. Take this challenge and I guarantee others will ask you about your faith story and you will be better prepared to share it. This challenge grew out of my sermon on May 21, 2017. You can listen to this sermon on our website or read it.

The Challenge:

From now until September, practice these four disciplines:

- 1) **Examen** – each night or once a week.
- 2) **Scripture Immersion** – read I Peter & a gospel a week 4x.
- 3) **Write down your story of faith** as it relates to Jesus.
- 4) **Share Your Story!** Make an appointment and get together with someone to do this, and solicit their feedback. Then pray to be asked by someone to share.

The Details:

- * **Sign up** or let Kent know if you are taking the challenge.

- * Find an **accountability partner** or ask for suggestions from the list of others who are taking the challenge.

- * **Examen** – is an ancient spiritual discipline that helps us become more attuned to the presence of God. In this practice you reflect in the evening back over the experiences of the day. Ask God to lead you. When did you sense light, energy and goodness? What were you doing? What were others around you doing? What was God doing?

Next, think of the opposite, times when you drifted away from God, times when you did not sense light, energy and goodness. What were you doing then? Where was God? Don't be hard on yourself, just ask His forgiveness and for His help to do better.

For a more detailed helpful audio guide that walks you through examen use the Pray-As-You-Go App on your mobile phone or go to their website here: <https://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/the-examen/> Do this nightly or else once a week looking back over the week that is past.

- * **Scripture Immersion** – Read Scripture – Start with I Peter – only 5 chapters and words of incredible hope! Then read each of the four gospels in four separate weeks. Mark is 16 chapters so 2 chapters a day and two days read 3 chapters, and in a week you will have read through the entire gospel! Matthew is 28 chapters, so 4 chapters a day. Luke is 24 chapters, John 21 chapters. Just plan out how many you will do and read through the gospel in a week. Focus not so much on the details and immersing yourself in the life and ministry of Jesus. You will read five books of the New Testament in this challenge: I Peter and Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- * **Write Down Your Story of Faith** – what is your story? What difference has Christ made in your life? Where have you come from and how did you get to this point? What might others be interested to know about your story as it relates to Jesus's story? What are the key moments? Write it down. Review it. Edit it. Keep it concise, but include the highlights. Ask the Lord to guide you as you write it.

- * **Share Your Story** – make an appointment with a friend or member of St. Luke's. Get together and share your story. Ask for honest feedback. Are there suggestions for how to improve it? Things to leave out, other things to add? Make the changes and then: **Pray for an opportunity to share!**