

INTRO

- Think of something you had a clear expectation for (movie, meal, experience). Did the reality exceed or fall short? Describe it.

READ

1 Peter 2:4-10; 1 Peter 5:12

REFLECT & RESPOND

Stand Firm is a series in which we are building our resilience to face adversity with a true sense of hope, by God's grace.

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

In our contemporary Western culture there is a strong aversion to adversity or suffering. Yet, Scripture sees adversity in a different light. For one, we are to expect a level of adversity in this life and God actually uses it for good in our lives. For example, **read 1 Peter 1:6-7**.

Qu: how does this verse challenge you to see adversity differently?

NEW IDENTITY, NEW STORY, NEW PURPOSE

Humans are story-hungry people, because stories help bring a sense of meaning, purpose and interpretation to our reality. (e.g. as wild as conspiracy theories get, they point to this hunger to make sense of the world).

Peter encourages us to stand firm by reminding us of our new identity as the people of God and therefore, we are now part of a much bigger story of God's redemption & hope. This "God Story" is to reshape our expectation and interpretation of reality.

"Christian growth is the process of becoming who you already are." — Terry Crist

Qu: What do you think about this quote and how it relates to our identity?

BECOMING WHO YOU ALREADY ARE

So, if Christian growth is becoming who we already are in Christ, it assumes we know and accept that identity. We can only grow in that identity as we pursue God's grace and presence (through scripture & prayer), relationship with his people, and his purposes in the world.

In other words, God's grace meets us as we intentionally feed and nurture our relationship:

- UP with Jesus
- IN with one another as a faith community
- OUT with those outside of our community

If the adversity of 2020 has gifted our church with anything, it is highlighting the need to stand firm in God's grace through the intentional nurturing of these 3 directional relationships.

Qu: Considering UP-IN-OUT, what relationship needs the most attention right now? How can we as a group help you?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray in response to the last question.
- Pray that we would stand firm knowing who and whose we are in Christ.