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Years ago when our family would go camping, we had a checklist to make sure we had packed everything for our adventure. Things like food, pillows, blankets, first-aid bandages and antiseptic, bug spray, suntan lotion, boardgames for a rainy day. No matter how much we prepared, we always seemed to forget something, like the one year I forgot to grab the handle that opens up the popup camper. Without that handle, we could not raise the camper, which meant we could not get inside.

I looked around the campground, trying to find a similar camper that might have a handle to borrow, and finally someone suggested an RV store in a nearby town. I drove to the store, described what I needed, and I finally had a handle. My family had been sitting at a picnic table, waiting for me to return, and when I did, we popped up the camper and began our adventure.

Even now, when I go camping, I still have my list, and although I no longer have that popup camper, I still discover missing things. I've learned, however, that no matter what I have forgotten to

pack, I have everything I need: the sunshine to warm the day, trees to create oxygen for me to breathe, a breeze to cool me in the evenings, and even a rainy day to relax and read a book inside my small camper or tent. The simplicity of camping reminds me that God provides everything I need.

In the second letter from Peter, the writer suggested that God has provided everything we need as he wrote to the early church. He wrote that God's "divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness." Do you believe that? Do you have everything you need in life?

It's difficult to feel that we have everything, isn't it? Especially when we can shop online for anything we want but maybe don't really need. It's so easy—tap a few buttons on our phone or keys on the computer, charge to a credit card, and have it delivered in just a few days. We don't even have to stop and think whether we really need the item until it's on our doorstep.

The letter from Peter wasn't talking about shopping, of course, or even individual needs and

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wants, but about the community of faith. We often think in terms of what we as individuals want, but the writer was thinking about the broader community, the church.

The letter begins with encouraging words: “May you have more and more grace and peace through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.”

Isn't that something we still long for today—grace and peace? We need the knowledge that God's grace can forgive any mistakes and sins we do, not just once, but over and over again. And we need the experience of peace, even in the challenging times of life, to know that God will get us through the tough patches, and that even in death, God will still provide us a safe place.

During the years of the early church, not everyone believed they had any hope after death, for there were many teachings that competed with the church's teaching to trust in Jesus, such as the philosophy called Epicureanism.

This teaching was named after the Greek philosopher Epicurus, who lived 300 years before

Jesus. Epicurus rejected the idea of immortality, writing that “Death is nothing to us; for that which is dissolved, is without sensation, and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.”¹ In other words, why worry about death, because you won't feel anything after you're dead.

So, he proposed that we should enjoy our lives now as much as we can. He suggested that the chief value in life was seeking pleasure by avoiding politics and marriage, but we should enjoy any pleasures of the body and mind. These followers believed that whatever god existed was uninterested in humans and uninvolved in the world.

You can probably imagine how confusing this message sounded to those in the church. Peter's letter encouraged church folks to hold onto their beliefs, to trust that God has given us everything we need, even when faced with teachings that seem confusing and threatening.

Even today, we face the same dilemma, don't we? How many of us hear news on the TV about

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ideas that sound a little strange. How many times do we hear people arguing over religious or political opinions? How many times do we feel we just don't have enough ability to understand what's going on in the world?

All the time, right?

The letter written to the early church had not only words of hope for them, but for us as well, for it reminds us that we have everything we need, even when we don't realize it.

Peter's letter contained a list of qualities that God had provided for them and us, things that I've asked several people to add to our suitcase, to remind us that we're packed up with everything we need: "good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love."

I imagine you have experienced some of those qualities here in our church, and I bet you can think of many other qualities or things we have in our life together in our church that give us hope. Take a moment to write one or two words of things we already have here in our church and drop them off in the suitcase.

[Read all the qualities/words]

Isn't that amazing? All these things God has already provided. Right here in the kin-dom of God, where we as kin celebrate together what God is doing in the world among us. We're already packed up with everything we need.

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism>