



08/25/2019
1 Peter 4:7-11

BIG IDEA

Living out the gospel in the church will be marked by **prayer, love, hospitality, and service.**

LOOKING BACK

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Invite members to share any questions or points that came up in their family discussions regarding last week's study. Invite them to share ways God continued to speak to them as they sought to apply those truths throughout the week.

- What is the best gift you have ever received? What made it so special?
- Did that gift change your life in any way? Have you been able to use that gift to change the lives of others? How so?

It's not unusual to buy something for ourselves or to buy a gift for someone else. But it's not as common for these gifts to have the power to change lives. Yet spiritual gifts can do just that. The gifts God gives all believers are meant to equip us to live out the gospel in the body of Christ in a way that profoundly impacts us. These gifts are marked by prayer, love, hospitality, and service.

LOOKING IN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| *Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:7-9.*

- What types of things are most people motivated to do when they get a sense that their time is short or "the end is near"?
- In response to understanding that "the end of all things is at hand," why did Peter give instructions that are others-centered rather than self-centered?
- In this week's sermon, we learned that "You will be your greatest enemy to hospitality." How have you seen the truth of this play out in your life?

Believers in Peter's day lived in anticipation of Jesus' return. In fact, most of them believed He would come back during their lifetimes. Peter encouraged them to let their anticipation guide them to love one another earnestly. As the first and essential priority ("above all"), believers were to maintain love for each other. The words Peter used convey a sense of fervency. Believers' love for one another was to be unfailing and kept at full strength. The Greek word translated "love" is agape, the distinctive Christian term for God's kind of love. Agape is sacrificial, self-giving, determined good will that acts in others' best interests. Believers are to extend this distinct love to all others—even to enemies—but especially to other Christians.

- Peter says we are to keep loving each other earnestly, or to maintain our love for one another. What are some practical steps we can take to keep from taking each other for granted and to keep our love for one another from growing cold?

Peter stressed the reason believers were to love one another: because love covers a multitude of sins. Interpreters have presented various suggestions concerning Peter's meaning: (1) Christians who consistently demonstrated love would receive mercy at their judgment. (2) Believers were to remember God's love covered their numerous sins. (3) God's kind of love does not look for others' flaws and sins but seeks to help wrongdoers. (4) Genuine love does not publicize others' sins but forgives repeatedly, shielding the offenders from exposure and condemnation. Love forgives others readily and repeatedly (see Matt. 18:21-22). Love is not blind to others' sins, but it covers them in the sense of letting the offences go rather than hanging on to them. In other words, we are to show other people the same grace God has shown us.

- Is true biblical hospitality possible without love? How does this fact impact your understanding of what it means to show hospitality in the church?
- If hospitality means you show up in practical ways, then what are some of those practical ways we can each express biblical hospitality in the church?

Hospitality is a reflection of our love for other believers and a sign that we are living in community.

| Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:10-11.

- Respond to the following statement: Every believer should serve others in the church in the way God has uniquely gifted him or her to do so.
- What are some reasons why many believers don't serve others in the church?
- Have you seen God receive glory through someone's service in the church? Give an example.
- What is your initial reaction to the fact that your service and hospitality is used to bring glory to the God of the universe?

Peter encouraged believers to use their gifts to minister to others. Even as each believer received a divine endowment, he or she was to use it to serve others. Believers were to minister consistently, and they were to be good managers of God's varied grace. These endowments of God's grace were not self-generated but were stewardship responsibilities to be discharged faithfully in service for God. In other words, they were to turn grace into grace.

The purpose of our service and hospitality in the church is that God would be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. God, not the speaker or the servant, was to receive praise as the Provider of the gifts and of the strength to exercise them.

LOOKING FORWARD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- Two of the ways other people often see God's grace in you is by what you stop and what you start. What is one thing you need to stop and one thing you need to start in order to extend hospitality to others in the church?
- What is a spiritual gift you have, and how are you using it as a way to show God's grace to others?
- As you consider the spiritual gift or gifts you think God has given you, how would you use them differently if your primary goal was truly to love and serve others?

FAMILIES

Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.

- Who are some people at church who have shown God's love to you? How have they done it?
- There is no age-limit on God's ability to use people to bring Him glory. He can use you and He wants to use you to serve others in the church. What are some ways you like to help out at church? Who is someone who might come to know God better if you show them love and use the gifts God has given you?

PRAY

Thank God for the privilege of loving and serving others in His church for His glory. Ask God to remind you that your time is limited and to give you the courage to be faithful stewards of the gifts He has given you in that time. Pray for new opportunities to show love by getting involved in the life and ministry of the church by using your gifts.

COMMENTARY

| 1 Peter 4:7-11

4:7. All the major events in God's plan for redemption have occurred, and all things are now ready for Jesus Christ to return and rule. Therefore connects this doctrinal word to the behavioral and ethical consequences that ought to be demonstrated in the believer's life and in the life of the church. One of the proofs of being a Christian is not simply having a hope for the future; the proof is having a hope that makes a difference in our lives today, in the present. As we live in the expectation of the second coming of Christ, some things need to take priority in our lives.

First on this list of priorities is purposeful prayer. Such prayer must be clear minded and self-controlled. To "be clear minded" suggests that believers pray intelligently or that they think about and evaluate their situations in life maturely and correctly as they begin to pray about them. In light of the context, perhaps Peter was cautioning them against giving way to eschatological frenzy and panic. To be "self-controlled" as one comes to prayer suggests that believers are to pray with a mind that is focused and alert. In other words, prayer should not be practiced nonchalantly or flippantly. Believers are to take prayer seriously.

4:8. The second priority is forgiving love. Above all, love each other deeply burns into our minds the supreme importance of love as the controlling factor in all relationships in the church (see 1:22; 2:17; 3:8). This kind of love (agape) can be commanded because it is primarily a decision of the mind, not a feeling into which a person falls. The goal of agape love is always to seek the good of the other person. The evidence of agape love is action, not words. The extent of agape love is sacrifice. Thus, believers are to love each other "deeply." This word means "to be stretched." True agape love is constantly being stretched to the limit by the demands made on it. This is precisely where agape love shines, because it is not exhausted when it becomes difficult or inconvenient.

One of the most difficult and inconvenient times to extend love is when someone in the church has hurt or wronged us. We must demonstrate a love that is willing to be stretched because love covers over a multitude of sins. "Covers" means "willing to forgive." The present tense indicates that which is to be constantly true in the life of the believer.

Love does not ignore the reality of personal sin any more than it justifies or condones sin. Confrontation of sin is appropriate and necessary, especially when we demonstrate love. However, it is just as important to demonstrate a willingness to forgive and then to move on. Forgiveness, like love, is an act of the will, a personal choice. A person chooses either to forgive or not to forgive.

4:9. Believers should put action into the love command. Hospitality among Christians is an important and tangible expression of love. In the first century, hospitality was a common courtesy that even nonbelievers extended to others. Scripture lifts Christian hospitality to a higher level. A believer's attitude toward the necessity and courtesy of hospitality should be without grumbling. This expression speaks of murmuring and of repeated words of complaint. Such words were often spoken, not quietly to themselves, but to others. Obviously, the arrival of guests in any century can be inconvenient for a variety of reasons. Even the best-behaved guests can overstay their welcome. Therefore, Christians are to provide hospitality without complaining or whining about the time and expense involved. This is an expression of agape love.

4:10–11. One final priority remains for believers who live in the light of Christ's second coming and who wish to demonstrate agape love toward one another. This priority can best be summarized as intense serving. Every believer is to heed this injunction. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.

Every believer in every church has received a spiritual gift from God for use in the life of the church. Within the body of Christ, love for each other finds expression in the use of spiritual gifts, not for self-advancement or as an attention-getter, but for the benefit of others. Every Christian, then, is capable of ministering to others within the body of Christ.

"Gift" (charisma) literally means "a gift of grace." When Christians receive God's grace in this way, we have the responsibility to share this gift with other Christians. Through such sharing we are faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. What has been given to the individual as a gift of grace has also been given for the benefit of the body as a whole. Believers are agents of God in passing on the benefits of his grace in our life. God does not grant us gifts of grace for our personal use; he gives them for the benefit of the body of Christ.

Verse 11 illustrates this point by dividing the many gifts of grace into two broad categories: speaking and serving. Speaking includes not simply preaching or teaching, but many kinds of gifts involving speech, such as evangelism, speaking in tongues, prophecy, encouragement, and leadership. Serving includes any type of assisting or encouraging ministry that directly targets the benefit of others within the body of Christ, such as contributing to the needs of others, healing, miraculous powers, showing mercy, and encouragement.

Believers are to take these gifts seriously and to exercise them with an attitude of dependence on God (speak the very words of God, do it with the strength of God). When the gifts of grace are applied in this way, the attention and praise shift from the individual believer to God, the one who has gifted the believer in the first place.