

Friday: *Your Kingdom Come...*

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Reflect:

Someone who is a “steward” is held accountable for that with which they are entrusted. Peter says that all Christians have a gift(s) from God (i.e., a ‘spiritual’ gift) that need to be put to use. If they are not, we will be held accountable.

Why does Peter only mention these two, generic, gifts (i.e., ‘speaking’ and ‘serving’)? It seems the breakdown is similar to Acts 6. Peter was involved in that scenario as well. Therefore it seems Peter is saying that certain people will do certain things in the body of Christ – but all are important...

Let us not forget what has come before these verses. Peter said God's people are to pray (4:7) and love one another (4:8 – which includes showing hospitality in v9). Apparently Peter would agree with Paul that if someone doesn't have love then they are a “clanging symbol” (1Cor13:1). Without love, we have nothing.

Respond:

Like it or not, you have a spiritual gift (at least one). Do you know what it/they are? Have you asked anyone?

Do you think God gets the glory for what takes place at New Life?

Do you like to encourage people? If so, can you do more of it? It seems encouragement is something sorely missing from many congregations.

Pray: Pray for God to be glorified through your life today. Continue to pray for the formulation of the 2009 “ministry plan” (what many call a budget) – pray we will use our finances in a way that will bring God glory. Praise God for His protection. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Saturday: *Nothing New...*

Read: 1 Peter 4:12-18

Reflect:

Hardships will come to those who seek to follow Jesus with their lives. Yet don't be discouraged, God's people have always faced trials. I hope that after a week of spending some time reflecting on 1Pet4:1-11 we are all a bit more emboldened to “step up to the plate” and live valiantly for God.

Wouldn't it be nice if we simply knew how great our reward in “heaven” would be? Do you think that would encourage more people to remain faithful? Do you think it would encourage more people to share their faith? Do you think...

The Christmas season is upon us. Soon people will be meeting with extended family for “Christmas” – at least it seems some of those happen on weekends leading up to ‘the day’. As wonderful as Christmas is, its reality means a harsh wake-up call for many. God demands our obedience. A child that was born years ago divides humanity...

Respond:

How has the past week of daily devotions been helpful for you?

Are you upbeat in your walk with God? Do you share that with others? If you're not, will you seek help?

Remember, tonight is the Larry DeLawder concert at New Life. Pray it will be an enjoyable experience for all who come.

Pray: Pray for those God is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow to be obedient and come. Pray that what we do tomorrow is pleasing to God and that lives will be positively impacted by the interactions we have, the singing, preaching, and teaching...pray for a God-honoring day. Thank God for His love.

Ready or Not...

November 30 – December 6

It seems that there are always wars taking place on earth. In fact...

- There are between 24 and 29 “major wars” and “conflicts” taking place across the globe right now.
 - A “major war” and/or “conflict” means that more than 1,000 people have died, more than one nation is involved (more than two for international conflicts), and they have the potential to turn into a multi-national and regional conflict.
- There are also between 27 and 31 “minor wars” and “conflicts” taking place across the globe right now.
 - These have a relatively small impact on the world or region in which they occur (although they aren't “minor” to those involved). Generally speaking they have totaled less than 1,000 deaths, involve one nation (if internal) or two nations (if international), and don't have the likelihood of turning into a multi-national and regional conflict.

While those wars get the major headlines in the world news, there is another war that is behind all of those wars (or conflicts) as well as headlines such as these...

- “Nurse Accused of Being Drunk Twice in Operating Room”
- “D.A.: Church Shooter Confessed, Would've Killed Others”
- “Father Raped Daughters for 30 Years, Bore 9 Children”
- “Van der Sloot Says He Sold Natalee Holloway”

In 1 Peter 4:1 Peter tells us to “arm ourselves for battle”. This battle is the most important battle we will ever face. How we conduct ourselves in it will have eternal ramifications for us, as well as others around us. It doesn't matter if we are ready for the battle or not, it wages on...

Christians are different – we are set apart and holy to God. That is our calling, it is why we are called “saints” (e.g., 1Cor1:2; Eph1:1; Phil1:1). Yet we all live in a world that is sinful, corrupt, full of hate, violence – in a word – FALLEN. This is why Peter has reminded his readers they are “exiles” (1Pet1:1; 2:11) and “foreigners” (1Pet2:11). Those words are a reminder that our true allegiance is not to this earth. In light of that, consider...

- How are we to ‘say no’ to a variety of things for which we still have an attraction?
 - E.g., many sinful activities do have an element of pleasure.
- Where do we draw the line on certain things?
 - E.g., intoxication is wrong, but having a drink here and there can't be (e.g., 1Tim5:23).
- How do we keep in touch with those around us, who are non-Christians, when our world shouts out a message of affluence and pleasure seeking?

This battle often has roots in our minds, but is waged by what we do. Interestingly, how we function as “a church” indicates if we'll be successful or not...

Monday: Your Will Be Done...

Read: 1 Peter 4:1-2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

<p>Reflect: The concept of suffering is a dominant one in 1 Peter. In fact, 1 Peter has more than one out of every four occurrences of this verb for “suffer” in the New Testament (12 of 42). At times the “suffering” is just that – physical harm and mental trauma (e.g., 1:Pet2:19); at other times it is death (e.g., 1Pet3:18). It seems both nuances of suffering are possible in these verses, but I lean towards physical suffering and not death (at least in v1b). Yet there seems to be a metaphorical use as well...</p> <p>We don’t like to suffer – it’s really that simple. However, I think we need a different perspective on suffering. This is how The Message translated verse two, “Then you’ll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want”. That’s interesting isn’t it? Do we really not know what is good for us?</p> <p>The word for “ceased” implies a clear break – the change is noticeable (e.g., Lk8:24; 11:1). This is another indication that our “conduct” (cf. 1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1,2,16) is important. Remember from last week, people will ask questions...will our answers be rooted in the will of God?</p>	<p>Respond: To “arm yourselves” implies gathering weapons for battle; what are our weapons and for what battle?</p> <p>Do you grow tired of doing things you don’t want to do? What are those things?</p> <p>Remember, this is on the heels of Peter talking about immersion (3:21). Read Rom6 and see how it fits here.</p>
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Pray: Confess to God your desire to live according to His will. Confess to God the things you thought of above that you don’t want to do. Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews; elders at New Life. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: But Deliver Us From Evil...

Read: 1 Peter 4:3³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

<p>Reflect: This verse is a great reminder that everyone is in need of the atoning blood of Jesus. The thrust of this verse is that, “you have wasted enough time in these activities...” I’m certain we all have wasted more than enough time pursuing what godless people pursue...</p> <p>We need to remind ourselves of that fact because to some Christians this verse seems too ‘icky’ for them to have been involved in at one point. While “sensuality” does denote casting off all moral restraint and decency, and “orgies” do involve unrestrained sex, we must not forget...</p> <p>Everyone’s “passions” have gotten the best of them at some point. The word for “drunkenness” can mean ‘drunk,’ but it also means following physical desires. None of us are as pristine as we would like to think we are – at least not in our past; more than likely not in the present either...</p>	<p>Respond: What has God truly “freed you from” as far as your former life before Jesus is concerned?</p> <p>Read Rom1:29-31; Gal5:19-21 – these are similar lists to 1Pet4:3. Ask God for help in the areas that are a struggle for you.</p> <p>When it comes to God and His Kingdom, what is your number one passion? How do others know that?</p>
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Pray: Pray for the unity and purity of New Life. Pray for Brent McCrory; the preaching minister at New Life. Pray New Life’s radio ads on KVOE will be a blessing for New Life and God’s Kingdom. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors...

Read: 1 Peter 4:4-5⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

<p>Reflect: These verses, especially verse four, are further evidence that Peter’s audience once lived very ungodly lives. It’s a dilemma in which we find ourselves when we submit to the Lordship of Jesus. We’ve changed, but we have friends who have not...</p> <p>What are we to do in those instances? Certainly we don’t want to break off a friendship with someone who also needs to submit to the Lordship of Jesus! Yet there are certain things a Christian simply will not do (cf. 1Pet4:3; Rom1:29-31; Gal5:19-21). Given this fact, there has to be ways to spend time with ‘those friends’ in other settings. They need to know we still care for them...</p> <p>The world is in such a mess. In fact, it seems that those who seek to live for God come up with the short end of the stick quite often. That will one day be made right. Yet the fact that it will be set right should prompt us to be more diligent in sharing Jesus with our non-Christian friends.</p>	<p>Respond: Do you have friends from your “old crowd” you need to talk to about Jesus?</p> <p>Are you perhaps a friend from an “old crowd” that someone came back to after learning about Jesus? I.e., are you the fruit of someone else not forsaking “former” friends?</p> <p>Pray for at least five people you know who need to submit to the Lordship of Jesus.</p>
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Pray: Pray for this coming Sunday’s elders and official church board meetings. Pray for Ed Asbury, Mike Haag, and Keith Krause; deacons at New Life. Pray for this Saturday’s Larry DeLawder concert. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: On Earth As It Is In Heaven...

Read: 1 Peter 4:7-9⁷ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

<p>Reflect: Even though nearly 2,000 years have passed since Jesus was here on earth, the end is still “at hand”. What that verb means is that a) nothing else needs to happen before Jesus comes back, b) the Resurrection of Jesus ushered in the “last days”, c) His coming will be in an instant – without warning...</p> <p>In light of all that, we had better be about God’s business. This is a reason why Peter says we need to have a sound mind and be thinking about situations in the proper way. Our prayers are vital for the Kingdom. Interestingly, this is the second time Peter has mentioned our prayers (cf. 3:7).</p> <p>Christians are still people, and people make mistakes. In light of that, we need to be full of love for others, especially “one another”. While we don’t totally ignore personal feelings and preferences there do come times when, for the greater good, people have to look past what is of concern for them. Without love we grow suspicious of others, have conflicts, are liable to misunderstand intentions, etc. That isn’t unity.</p>	<p>Respond: Do you live in anticipation of Jesus’ return? Are you ready? What about those you know?</p> <p>Do you come to the prayer meetings on Sunday evenings? Will you come this week?</p> <p>Read Rom13:10; Mt22:37-40. Love is essential.</p>
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Pray: Pray all of God’s people put the above verses into practice. Ask God to help your love for others grow stronger and stronger – particularly those who are part of New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.