

One Another

Lesson 13: Be Hospitable and Humble Toward One Another -- 1 Peter 4:7-11

Imagine the Christians who first received Peter's letter: scattered strangers in the provinces of Asia Minor, a marginal people in a hostile world, often slandered, sometimes persecuted, never quite at home. They are not a powerful institution. They are mostly ordinary households, meeting in homes, trying to follow a crucified and risen Lord in a culture that finds them strange. And to these pressed, tired, watching people, Peter writes words that lift their eyes and steady their hands. "The end of all things is at hand," he says. Everything is moving toward its appointed conclusion in Christ. So live, he tells them, in light of where the story is going.

You might expect that a word about the end would send people into a frenzy of speculation, charts of the future, fearful withdrawal, or anxious date-setting. Peter does the opposite. "The end of all things is at hand," he writes, "therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." The certainty of Christ's return does not make Peter wild; it makes him clear-headed and prayerful. He is not interested in feeding our curiosity about timetables. He wants us awake, alert, and on our knees, living each day as people who know the King is coming and who long to be found faithful when he does.

Then Peter turns, as the New Testament so often does, from the height of doctrine to the ground of daily love. "Above all," he says, "keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." Above all. Of all the ways to be ready for the Lord's return, this comes first: a love among the brethren that is earnest, stretched out, fervent. He spells out what such love looks like in the trenches of ordinary church life. It opens the door of the home without grumbling. It puts its gifts to work serving others. It speaks God's words and serves in God's strength. Love made practical, hospitable, and humble.

And notice where it all aims. "In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." That is the great goal pulsing beneath every "one another" command in this study. We do not love and welcome and serve one another to build our own reputations or to feel good about ourselves. We do it so that God is glorified through Jesus Christ, so that a watching world sees in our shared life a glimpse of the goodness of our God. In this final lesson we will let Peter teach us a readiness that is not anxious but loving, a hospitality that is not grudging but glad, and a service that does not boast but humbly points to God. This is what it means to be the church while we wait for our Lord.

Group Discussion: Peter says that because the end of all things is at hand, we should be "self-controlled and sober-minded." Why do you think the certainty of Christ's return so often produces either anxious speculation or careless complacency in people, rather than the clear-headed, prayerful, loving readiness Peter describes?

Personal Reflection: Think about your own home and your own gifts. When did you last open your door, your table, or your time to another member of the body, and did you do it gladly or with a quiet grumble? What is one gift God has given you that is sitting unused?

Read 1 Peter 4:7–11

Study Questions

1. Peter writes, “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.” What does Peter mean by “the end of all things,” and how does the certainty of Christ’s return shape the way we are to live now? Why does he draw out sober-minded prayerfulness rather than speculation about dates?
2. Be honest about how the thought of the Lord’s return actually affects you. Does it tend to make you anxious, indifferent, or curious about timetables, rather than clear-headed, prayerful, and loving? How might living as one who knows the King is coming change this week for you?
3. Peter says, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” Of everything he could have put first, why does Peter say love comes “above all,” and what does it mean that love “covers a multitude of sins” within the body of Christ?
4. Is your love for the members of your congregation “earnest,” stretched out and fervent, or has it cooled into mere familiarity and tolerance? Where is the Lord calling you to a more active, costly love toward a particular brother or sister?
5. Peter commands, “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” Why is hospitality among Christians so important to Peter that he commands it directly, and why does he take

such care to add “without grumbling”? What does ungrudging hospitality reveal about the heart?

6. When you think about opening your home, your table, and your schedule to fellow Christians, do you welcome them gladly, or do you find yourself reluctant, inconvenienced, or quietly grumbling? What attitudes or fears get in the way of glad hospitality?
7. Peter writes, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” What does this teach us about where our gifts come from, who they are for, and what it means to be a “steward” rather than an owner of God’s grace?
8. What gift, ability, or resource has God entrusted to you, and are you using it to serve the body, or letting it sit idle? What is one specific way you could put it to work for fellow Christians this week?
9. Peter writes, “Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” How do speaking God’s words and serving in God’s strength keep our service humble, and why must the final goal of all our serving be God’s glory and not our own?
10. Look back across 1 Peter 4:7–11 as a whole: prayerful readiness, earnest love, ungrudging hospitality, and the humble stewardship of gifts for God’s glory. Name one specific way you

sense Jesus forming you through this passage, and through this whole study of the “one another” commands, and what you will do about it.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 12:9–13, where genuine love, brotherly affection, and the pursuit of hospitality mark the body of Christ; Hebrews 13:1–2, where we are urged to keep loving one another and not to neglect hospitality to strangers; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, where the same Spirit gives varied gifts for the common good of the body; Philippians 2:3–8, where the humble mind of Christ counts others more significant than ourselves; 1 Corinthians 10:31, where whatever we do is to be done all to the glory of God.