

Hope Through Stewardship

Bible Background • 1 PETER 4

Printed Text • 1 PETER 4:1–11 | Devotional Reading • LUKE 16:10–13

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: KNOW the cost of discipleship; FEEL able to recall a time when we relied on God's power; and LOOK for opportunities to serve others.

In Focus

Missions in other countries aren't as popular as they were at one time. Perhaps it's because there are people from so many other places living within our communities. It may be a result of the busy lifestyle that many have taken on. Or possibly it's the result of fear brought on by terror and unrest worldwide.

All of these issues concerned Michelle. However, since she was a young girl, the desire to share the Gospel in both word and deed in foreign lands burned within her. She longed to be a part of the Great Commission. How could she serve the Lord in a distant place?

Michelle had been faithful to her church, volunteering to serve at any opportunity. It was this eagerness that caught the attention of a visiting speaker. The speaker was from a country Michelle had always wanted to visit. When the invitation to serve on a short-term mission trip came, she gladly accepted. Overwhelming joy filled her heart as she prepared to minister to the needs of others in a foreign nation.

The clarion call of Acts 1:8 is relevant today: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Keep In Mind

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10, KJV)

Words You Should Know

A. Flesh (1 Peter 4:1) sarx (Gk.) – Used to denote the body (as opposed to the soul or spirit), or as the symbol of what is external; a human being.

B. Lasciviousness (v. 3) aselgeia (Gk.) – Depravity, iniquity, wickedness.

Say It Correctly

Lasciviousness. luh-SIV-ee-uhs-nuhs

Pentecost. PEHN-tee-kawst

KJV

- 1 **Peter 4:1** Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;
- 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.
- 3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:
- 4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:
- 5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.
- 6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.
- 7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.
- 8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.
- 9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.
- 10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
- 11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

NLT

- 1 **Peter 4:1** So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.
- 2 You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.
- 3 You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.
- 4 Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you.
- 5 But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.
- 6 That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.
- 7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.
- 8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.
- 9 Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.
- 10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.
- 11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

The People, Places, and Times

The Day of Pentecost. Fifty days (in the Greek, pentekoste) after the Passover Lamb had been slain, there were 120 of Christ's disciples gathered in an upper room, per their Master's instructions, waiting on power from on high. Secluded in this room in Jerusalem, Peter, the author of our Scripture text,

initiated the selection process for replacing Judas who had betrayed Christ. Among the requirements to be a replacement were: 1) having been with Jesus from the time of John's baptism; 2) being a witness of Jesus' resurrection; and 3) having beheld His ascension into heaven. The two men selected had been faithful followers and met these conditions. Of the two, Matthias was selected to complete the number of the 12 apostles.

Background

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1, 4). Men from every nation on Earth were in Jerusalem that day and were amazed when they heard these itinerant men speaking in their own languages.

This same Peter stood and preached a 3,000 souls-saving message, and many were added to the Church that day. We should move ahead to a point many years later in Peter's life. He is filled with the Holy Spirit and has become a leader in the Church Council at Jerusalem, learning many of the things God would have the Church to accept. He was visited on a rooftop and commanded to minister to a Gentile centurion (Acts 10:1–7), along with many other vital actions in the early church. Peter points his readers to Christ, our supreme example of how to be a servant to all humankind.

At-A-Glance

1. Christ's Example (1 Peter 4:1–2)
2. Christ's Teachings: Put off the Old, Put on the New (vv. 3–6)
3. Christ's Teachings: Be Sober, Watchful, and Prayerful (vv. 7–9)
4. Christ's Teachings: Gifts of Honor (vv. 10–11)

In Depth

1. Christ's Example (1 Peter 4:1–2)

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). Were Peter alive today, he may have worded this verse something like this: "Followers of Christ must put on the mind of Christ in order not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. This is not Burger King®; you cannot have it your way." Peter knew that flesh is an enemy of the Spirit. To maintain the mind of Christ, we must cut off the old fleshly habits and desires. We must renew our minds on a daily basis.

2. Christ's Teachings: Put off the Old, Put on the New (vv. 3–6)

Think back to the time when you first got saved. To be an excellent witness of that precious gift of salvation, old friends had to go. Even though they may have ridiculed and talked about you, to be a positive witness for God, you had to suffer that separation from the old lifestyle. The Bible tells us that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (from 1 Corinthians 15:33). A choice had to be made; you had to tell yourself, "Either I'll continue in my old sinful ways, or I will change the company I keep and walk in my salvation – be sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost."

Peter writes for us to be conscious of the judgment of Christ. It's often said that we must not fear someone who has neither heaven nor hell to put us in. People can only do so much to you. Jesus Christ alone has the power to judge. The Gospel has the power to turn lives around that are on a collision course with death, damnation, and destruction. Praise God for the power in the blood of Jesus. As servants of humankind, we must preach this great Gospel for all to hear.

3. God's Teachings: Be Sober, Watchful, and Prayerful (vv. 7–9)

As one vintage song proclaims, "In times like these, we need an anchor." We are admonished, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Jesus explained to His disciples, when asked about the end times, that there would be many signs. Among them are: deceivers of many; nations rising against nations; wars and rumors of wars; famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in many different places (Matthew 24:3–7). This, however, is only the beginning of the end. Peter admonishes the faithful: be sober and watchful in prayer (1 Peter 4:7).

We can all tell when another person loves us. Even little children know when they are loved. We are to love each other with a fervent love. Just think how much better it is to add energy and authenticity to the love that we share with our fellow Christians. According to Peter, this love will "cover the multitude of sins" (v. 8). Now it may be said that there are no skeletons in your closet, but grace is sufficient for all. Use love to cover another's faults; you may need that same favor returned to you someday.

4. Christ's Teachings: Gifts of Honor (vv. 10–11)

So often, we think of stewardship and relate it to money or things of material value. Here, Peter applies stewardship to the manifold grace of God. Earlier, in 1 Peter 1, we were given the concept that our faith, through trial, is more precious than gold. Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). As we see God's kingdom with the mind of Christ, everything else tends to fall into place.

Gifts are given according to God's grace. These godly gifts are to be used to glorify Him and Him alone. One of the problems of walking in the flesh is that flesh has a desire to be glorified.

When we take on our new nature in Christ, that attitude won't work. As the saying goes, "oil and water don't mix." The same applies to this subject: God's gifts and our flesh don't mix. We are accountable to God and our fellow persons to be ministers of righteousness, upholding the integrity of our calling in Christ Jesus. Naturally, Bible scholars see the similarity and cohesion of this passage of Scripture and apostle Paul's message to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12 and other passages. The bottom line is, I need you and you need me. We are all fellow servants of our King. It is tantamount that Jesus Christ receives all the praise and glory from the service we render to Him and one another. In the words of Jesus Christ Himself, we are made to know that "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (from Matthew 23:11). Let us go forth, empowered to serve.

Search the Scriptures

1. Explain in your own words what it means to put on the mind of Christ (1 Peter 4:1).
2. What suggestions does Peter give for overcoming habits of the flesh to walk in the newness of life (vv. 7–11)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. The world of church and the world in which we live have different priorities. The person who acquires the most "toys" wins in the eyes of the world. Discuss the ways that success is measured in God's kingdom. How can we apply these successful traits while in service to others? Which of these traits would glorify God especially?

Liberating Lesson

Sinful human nature is contrary to the nature of Christ. Prayerfully consider ways that you can minister to the body of Christ to build up and not tear down. However, let's not overlook the needs

and hurts of our fellow servants. Be an encouraging, empowering, inspirational blessing to your leaders, your fellow workers in Christ, and especially the wounded soldiers that are within your sphere of influence.

Application for Activation

The American culture is one of “me first,” self-reliance, and downright selfishness. Contrast how as servants of God, we can be a countercultural force in the world. Knowing this will not be an easy road to walk, identify ways we can minister to each other to encourage steadfastness in accomplishing the goal of impacting the world around us.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Peter 4:1–11

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

Peter talked in chapter 3 about Christ’s suffering and refers to it in this section. The word “therefore” links chapter 4 (NKJV) to the preceding chapter. Christ’s suffering occurred in His body while on the Cross and entailed emotional and physical suffering. Peter asks his audience to arm themselves with the same attitude as Christ. The word used in Greek, *hoplizo* (hop-LID-zo), means to equip oneself for battle or “likewise with the same mind.”

Sinfulness is too serious to be neglected. There should be no compromise with sin because it brings spiritual death. When one faces a deadly enemy, one has to take every necessary action to subdue and overcome this enemy. Hebrews 12:4 suggests that the struggle against sin may require shedding blood.

In 1 Peter 4:1 (NIV), the statement “whoever suffers in the body is done with sin” may seem difficult to understand. The Greek word for “body” is *sarkos* (SAR-kos). It is often translated “flesh” (*sarx*) and refers to the sinful nature in us. This is not to say that suffering can remove sin in one’s life, but rather as one commentary stated: “If anyone suffers for doing good and still faithfully obeys (God) in spite of suffering, that person has made a clean break with sin” (Life Application Bible, 2263). Galatians 5:16–22 talks about life in the flesh and life in the Spirit, and there Paul entreats his readers to walk according to the Spirit because life in the Spirit is opposed to life in the flesh. In 1 Corinthians 9:27,

Paul says in part that his strategy to avoid falling into sin is to “bring (his body) into subjection.” He then illustrated Israel’s failure in the desert resulting from immorality and idolatry.

It is obvious that these passages are not suggesting a kind of salvation by works or atonement of sins by any other means. The only lesson drawn from them is the responsibility of the believer in disciplining his life to shun evil. These disciplines can be painful sometimes.

2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

The attitude of suffering for a life of holiness is a Christian’s lifetime resolution, a determination to live in sanctification. This means a believer will not satisfy the cravings of fleshly desire. In Galatians 5:20–21, we find the list of these evil human desires. This resolution is willingness to suffer bodily struggles—physical and emotional. Subjection of the body is a prerequisite to a life of sanctification.

The person who turns from gratifying evil human desires orients his or her life toward fulfilling what is pleasing to God. Paul stresses that the will of God is a life of holiness. The resolution to fulfill God’s will keeps us away from evil human desires. The will of God and the cravings of our heart are in opposition. We will either obey God’s will or follow our own inclinations—not both at the same time.

3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

The sins described here refer to idol worship. The Israelites were enticed by the Moabites to sin through their cultic practices (Numbers 25:1–3; Revelation 2:14). Baal worship and many other pagans’ worship included immoral practices. In this letter, Peter mentions these vices and also names the context in which they take place. Not only should a Christian shun these sins, but the context in which these sins happen should be avoided as well.

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

The Christians whom Peter addresses in the letter were part of a culture and indulged in its sinful practices. When they received Christ, many gave up the sinful customs of their former lifestyles. Their refusal to conform to their society’s corrupt ways of life was noticed by their former friends and current neighbors and colleagues. These people could not understand how those who had followed them could now withdraw themselves.

Their abstention from idolatry and immoral behavior brought the fury of their former mates. In the early Church, Christians refused to take part in the worship of the king and were portrayed as enemies of the state. It was certainly painful to bear wrongful abuse, knowing the innocence of your behavior and the righteousness of your choices. This is why Peter advised his readers to have a clear conscience and good conduct that would confuse those who spoke maliciously about them (3:16).

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

The detractors of the Christians in Asia Minor will not go unpunished. They will have to give an account to God for their false accusations and their slander. God is the judge of humanity. Those who are still alive and those who are already dead will all be judged. This judgment is a prospect of the final judgment.

6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

The judgment of God is done in righteousness and fairness. This could mean that those who are now dead heard about the Gospel during their lifetime. In this way, their judgment is based on their response to the Gospel while they were alive. Being “judged according to men in the flesh” refers to physical death. Life “according to God in the spirit” refers to the judgment that decides the eternal fate of one’s soul.

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

The “end of all things” reminds us of the final judgment. Peter wants his readers to be alert—because the end “is at hand.” Peter wants them to focus in anticipation of the end of the world. The judgment day is getting nearer and there is a need for Christians to pray.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

The Christian community needs to express love among its members. Love “shall cover the multitude of sins” is a citation of Proverbs 10:12. It means that when there is love (“charity” as 1 Peter 4:8 states), believers, will forgive and overlook the sins of others. This does not imply complacency. We should strive to live out the second greatest commandment: to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

As Christians, the blood of Jesus has covered our sins. God did not condemn us for our sins, but He forgave us in Christ. In turn, we have to forgive each other and build unity (Colossians 3:13).

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Love was also expressed in offering hospitality to fellow Christians as they traveled. This is significant since accommodations akin to modern hotels were rare. Biblical hospitality consisted of providing shelter and food. However, a host’s patience can really be tried by a guest’s personality. In any circumstances, Peter urges the recipients of his letter to exercise hospitality “without grumbling” (NIV). As human beings, sometimes we abuse privileges such as hospitality and this can create difficulties in relationships. By A.D. 100, guidelines had been adopted to prevent abuse in Asia Minor. For example, a guest could not stay more than three days at the expense of the host (First Epistle of Peter, 159). The theme of hospitality was so important that in New Testament times, it was part of the qualification for elders in the church and for enrolled widows (First Epistle of Peter, 159).

10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

As Christians, Peter’s readers received various spiritual gifts. These gifts are from the Holy Spirit. The goal of the gifts is for the service of others, not for self-gratification (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7; Ephesians 4:11–13). The gifts should be used in faithfulness according to God’s purpose for granting them. The gifts’ appropriate use will meet the various needs of the Christian community. God works through each Christian to fill a need in the community. There are no “ungifted” Christians.

11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Two kinds of gifts exist: gifts of speaking, and gifts of service (Ephesians 4:11–12). All gifts should be exercised with the seriousness that they deserve and according to God's will. In Colossians 3:17, we are urged to do everything in the name of the Lord. Exercised in this way, these gifts bring God glory. A Christian's whole life should bring glory to God. Peter ends the section by praising God with a doxology.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Trust God to Provide
(Luke 12:22–28)

TUESDAY

The Unfailing Treasure
(Luke 12:29–34)

WEDNESDAY

Be Alert and Ready
(Luke 12:35–40)

THURSDAY

The Faithful and Prudent Manager
(Luke 12:41–48)

FRIDAY

The Perfect Gift from Above
(James 1:12–18)

SATURDAY

Faithful in Little and Much
(Luke 16:10–13)

SUNDAY

Good Stewards of God's Grace
(1 Peter 4:1–11)