

1 Peter 4:1-11

Week 6 - Living for Christ

Learning Objectives

- Understand the tension between being saved yet still having to be in the world, where we might experience judgment for our faith, and even be asked to physically suffer for it.
- How our outward actions should be driven by our faith in Jesus. He suffered for us so we should serve others selflessly as well.

Pray for your time together today.

? Have you ever done anything unusual to fit in with a group? What happened?

1 Peter 4:1-11 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ² As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

? Chapter 4 starts with “therefore” we should arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ in his suffering.

How do the previous passages lead us to that conclusion (look at 1 Peter 3:13-22)?

Possible Answer: {Leader's Note: If it's been awhile since your group studied the previous chapters or you have people in your group who were not there for the previous studies, feel free to read this possible answer out loud instead of asking the question} When a passage starts with “Therefore” it's helpful to consider “what is the therefore there for.” In the previous chapters of 1 Peter, Peter talks about how

Christ's suffering was on our behalf. Jesus, who had no sin, was punished and through that punishment his righteousness is given to us so that we are not separated from God by our sin. Peter tells us that Jesus voluntarily suffered so that we would receive salvation, so in response we should be willing to suffer for what is right and will spread the gospel.

? Knowing that we will always struggle with sin, what does Peter mean when he says whoever suffers in the body is done with sin?

Possible Answers: Peter is saying that when we accept Christ (evidenced by our willingness to live according to his Word even if it leads to suffering) we are no longer bound by sin. We receive forgiveness for our sin and are no longer condemned by it, so it loses power in our lives and frees us to live for Christ.

? Look at verses 2-5. As a result of following Christ, how does Peter say our lives will change?

Possible Answers: We will turn from human desires towards living for the will of God. We are no longer captive to sin, so we can stop doing the things that make us feel pain or shame.

? How might the world respond to this change in our lives?

Possible Answers: The world responds with confusion which turns to abuse. This abuse could be teasing, friends pulling away, or persecution from family or authority figures. The world could also respond with curiosity about the change, which could lead to great gospel conversations.

? Have you experienced a response, positive or negative, from living differently as a Christian?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. For example, think about how people responded when you first became a Christian.

Leader's Note: The first part of verse 6 has been interpreted many different ways. It is a challenging topic that even commentators are split on. Peter could be referring to those who are alive today but are not following Christ, or those who were dead for many years before Jesus came on the scene.

? As Christians we experience the tension of not being immune to the judgment of the world, even though we know that the state of our spiritual lives should be our primary concern. How has this impacted you, and what encouragement can you take from this passage as you live with this tension?

Possible Answers: We can be encouraged knowing that Jesus suffered as well (likely more intensely than any of us will ever suffer) and experienced this tension acutely. While this might not make our bodily suffering less painful or uncomfortable, we have to remain rooted in the hope of salvation and our relationship with God - which has the ability to bring us more fulfillment than the acceptance of the "world" ever could.

? Look at verses 7-11. Because “the end of all things is near,” what are the things we should be focused on as we await Christ’s return?

Possible Answers: Spend time in prayer, love each other deeply, serve according to the gifts God has given us, bring glory to God with the things you do in your daily life.

? Looking at verse 7, why does prayer require “an alert and sober mind?”

Possible Answers: Purposeful prayer about your current situation that is a reflection of God’s will for ourselves and the world is important. Prayer is not submitting a “wish list” to God. It is time to be in his presence and feel the Holy Spirit meet you where you are at that time. This could be impeded by over-emotional self-centered prayers.

? Optional question: Knowing we are called to suffer for Christ, what types of things should we pray for in our lives?

Possible Answers: We should be asking for God’s glory to be revealed, no matter the cost to our comfort, as opposed to focusing on what God can do for us (i.e. asking for a good day or that something would work out the way we want it to).

? How does verse 10 help shift our perspective of grace being something we receive to something we steward and share with others through service?

Possible Answers: God does not only give us grace to forgive our sins, but to serve one another selflessly, to love one another selflessly, and to practice being one body in our communities. He also gives each of us different gifts to serve one another in unique and useful ways.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Is there an area in our life you should be more willing to “suffer” for God (i.e. are there worldly behaviors you need to address in your life in response to what God has done for you)?

? Peter calls us to serve with the strength that God provides. Are you serving in ways in which you can succeed under your own power or are you serving in ways in which you must wholly depend on God for success? The first option gives you the glory and the second option gives it rightfully to God. What specific gifts can you use this week to serve others selflessly?