

Feed My Sheep, 1 & 2 Peter: Lesson 5

Living For God

Memory Text: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (1 Peter 3:12)

Setting The Stage: The motor home has allowed us to put all the conveniences of home on wheels. A camper no longer needs to contend with sleeping in a sleeping bag, cooking over a fire, or hauling water from a stream. Now he can park a fully equipped home on a cement slab in the midst of a few pine trees and hook up to a water line, a sewer line and electricity.

Motor homes are equipped with a satellite dish. No more bother with dirt, no more smoke from the fire, no more drudgery of walking to the stream. It’s become possible to go camping and never have to go outside.

Why do people buy a motor home? They buy them in the hope of seeing new places, of getting out into the world. Yet motor homes are decked out with the same furnishings as house living rooms, thus nothing really changes. A couple may drive to a new place, put themselves in a new surrounding, but the newness goes unnoticed, because the old setting has been carried along.

True living for God, a new life in Christ, can only begin when the comfortable patterns of the old life are left behind. How is that accomplished, and what does this new life look like?

Sunday / Being Of One Mind

1 Peter 3:8, 9; Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 2:1-4

In chapter 2 and first few verses in chapter 3, Peter speaks to Christians in general, then to specific situations – Christian servants and their masters, and Christian husbands and wives. Now he speaks to Christians in general again for the remainder of his letter continuing his discussion on Christians should live in the world

1 Peter 3:8, 9. All that follows from this point on down to the “Amen” in chapter 4 verse 11 must be understood in the context of verses 8 and 9. Peter is summarizing his comments by highlighting five imperatives he enjoins upon believers.

What was the one word that was used over again when Peter was offering counsel to Christians regarding their relationship with governing authorities, Christians servants and their masters, and husbands and wives? The word was “submit.”

What is submission? What's the first thought that comes to your mind? Is it positive or negative? In our culture the word often incites controversy. The reason many have a strong emotive response to the word is because of what they associate with the word in their minds. For many submission means inferior, doormat, controlled. Based on their negative memories, some equate submission with put downs, anger, threats, rejection, and fear. But are these the ideas behind biblical submission? What did Paul mean when he wrote, "Submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21)?

He wasn't saying that there would be no authority in the church or home, otherwise two Christians wouldn't be able to get through the same door. He also wasn't saying be a doormat and compromise your faith and principles like the timid Caspar Milquetoast. What he was saying was that Christians should live with a "servant" attitude and lifestyle, like their Lord, Jesus. He was also saying that Christians should be at rest. It's a hard life kicking "against the pricks," demanding and fighting for ones rights. A submissive Christians trusts God to meet his or her needs. He or she doesn't have anything to prove.

Biblical submission also includes growing in Christ-like character qualities. A submissive person is not cantankerous, assertive, pushy, self-willed, and difficult to get along with. Believers are to be growing in humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love.

Ephesians 4:2: "With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love."

Philippians 2:1-4: "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

I saw the exact opposite of this behavior while getting gas for my car the other day. According to the loud-mouthed lady, the equally loud-mouthed man had pushed himself in front of her car to get to the pump first. She yelled, then he yelled, and neither would give way. My girls were in the car wondering what the racquet was about. I was about to put myself into the fray, when the offended/offender drove off. Don't know what I was going to say, but I couldn't stand the thought that my girls were witnessing two grown adults act like spoiled brats and the two brats didn't care who was watching. ☺

Let's be kind and courteous to one another, amen?

Monday / To Suffer In The Flesh

1 Peter 3:9-12,18, 21; 4:1, 2; Romans 6:11

1 Peter 3:9, 10. Peter reminds Christians that if we would love life, see good days, and inherit a blessing, we ought to watch what comes out of our mouths, avoid evil, do good, and seek peace and pursue it (not make everyone happy, make lots of money, own a chalet in Lake Tahoe, etc.). The inspired Word says that living this life is living the good life!

And did you notice that we are “called” to this life? I recall be selected to play on the Darwin soccer club. I was called, I was chosen to represent the team and the city well. I was called to play well and win, but not with out proper preparation and training. It was a high honor. You and I are called to represent Christ in our words, actions, and attitudes. What a greater privilege! And Christ Himself has provided all that we need to be able to play well and win.

1 Peter 3:12. Here is the motive for the Christian to live the good life. As God loving watches over His people and treats them with kindness, His people treat others with that same kindness that they are shown by God.

Verses 13-17 refer to the Christians second calling, and that’s to suffering. It doesn’t sound pleasant, does it? What type of suffering did Peter refer to? Was it merely verbal abuse, slander, and malicious talk? Or did it involve physical abuse, as well? It may not matter, as Peter’s main point was that “the destiny of Christ is the destiny of the Christian.”

1 Peter 2:21; 3:14, 18. We’re blessed because Christ walked that road before we did and because we have the privilege to follow in His steps. Peter encourages us not to consider “fiery trials” as a “strange” or unheard of experience (1 Peter 4:12) in view of the fact that “Christ also...once suffered.”

Should we find it a privilege to be partakers of Christ’s suffering? Peter thought so (1 Peter 4:13). What does this mean? It means that we can find a close companionship with Jesus in our suffering. Suffering often has a purpose. While Satan, not God, is the author of suffering, God does suffer suffering in order to build our characters and keep us close to Him. Human nature tends to approach God more during affliction than during easy days. God in His mercy allows us to experience pressure so that we learn that we have a friend in Jesus.

1 Peter 3:21, 22. Christ was victorious through His suffering. He rose from the dead glorified. He ascended to heaven, where everything is now subject to Him as benevolent King. Christ warned us that we would have trouble in this world. But He told us to be of good cheer. Why? Because He had overcome the world (John 16:33). In other words, Jesus’ victory in suffering is the assurance of our victory through our trials and troubles today.

How can we be victorious? Peter introduces the subject in these verses – death to sin and self, and fleshes it out in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. The only way you and I can submit and suffer well is to “reckon” ourselves to be dead and alive to Christ.

Romans 6:11: “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

You can hit, spit on, kick, and curse at a dead man, but that dead man will not respond. Likewise, when we suffer for Christ’s sake, we are to reckon the “old man” to be dead, and alive to Christ – Christ’s words, attitudes, and actions showing through.

Tuesday / Born Again

1 Peter 4:3-6; Romans 12:2

When we think of peer pressure we think that only youth experience it. But that’s not always the case. Adults also want to be accepted and thus the pressure to conform (to do what others are doing) can be powerful and hard to resist. A person might feel pressure to do something just because others are doing it (or say they are). Peer pressure can influence a person to do something that is relatively harmless — or something that has more serious consequences. Satan’s desire is for Christian’s to succumb to peer pressure. And so he plays on our sinful natures to get us to trip up. These natures we are born with – natures that are powerless to resist sin. That’s why Christ offers to us the chance to be born again; powerful to resist temptation through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1 Peter 4:3-6. “Will of the Gentiles.” Lewdness – crude and offensive in a sexual way (dirty). Lusts – evil desires and passions that lead to sin. Drunkenness, revelries, and drinking parties – drinking and partying hard. Abominable idolatry – paganism.

“Run with them.” Because the unconverted are usually blind to the advantages and blessings of the Christian way of life, they are often surprised that their friends, now Christian, live a different life. For someone not a Christian happiness and satisfaction are constantly sought for in the natural desires – food, drink, sensual indulgences. For someone not living that way anymore it’s a strange and foolish thing to the non-Christian. Unfortunately, because they think that the Christian lives a “holier than thou” life, sparks of resentment ignite into the fires of hate and eventually persecution.

Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Wednesday / Sins Of The Flesh

1 Peter 4:2, 3

1 Peter 4:2. “Ceased from sin.” Through trials and temptations we are led to surrender more fully to the power and control of the Holy Spirit. Our lives should give evidence of the fact that we have turned our backs on sin, Satan, and self, and that we are walking in the humble footsteps of Jesus, seeking to become more like Him. Sin, including those things mentioned in verse 3, no longer reigns in the life.

1 Peter 4:3, 7. We are especially warned against participating in these acts just before the return of Christ. Will God’s people have to be on special guard against lewdness or sensuality, lusts and passions that lead to sin, and drunkenness in the last days?

Consider these facts: In the next 24 hours, alcohol will be responsible for nearly half of all the homicides; the people who will die on the highway; the people who will be admitted to the hospital; the people who will be incarcerated in jail or prison; the people who will be arrested for domestic violence; the people who will be born with birth defects. In addition, alcohol deserves a mention for being responsible for a quarter of all suicides. Seeing the alcohol industry is the second largest industry in dollars in the world, with sales at \$1161 billion, it’s no wonder.

It’s clear enough from these appalling statistics that any clear thinking person, especially a Christian, would feel profound conviction to avoid a drug that accounts for an incredible amount of misery in every culture it touches.

We also live in a promiscuous age. Infidelity is on the rise. Sex sells (implicit or explicit). Nothing is left to the imagination (not that one ought to let their minds wander). Music, TV, movies, and the internet bombard the senses with imagery that should cause us to blush. There has been a long-time push to normalize immoral behavior, and it’s working. Today’s 18-24 year-olds view “not recycling” more immoral than pornography. Everything that we once thought wrong is now promoted as right. After all, it is said, “We are human and we can’t help ourselves.”

The sexualization of children has spawned a generation of adults who have delved into every perversion under the sun. Relationships have also become twisted and perverted. This has devastated marriages, which are now more likely to end in divorce than not.

And the internet has also had a hand in this. An American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers survey recently showed that in the last 12 months, internet-related issues caused 62% of all divorce cases. From meeting partners for affairs, to delving into perversions once suppressed or addiction to pornography, families are being destroyed by the immoral fiber that has become pervasive in our society.

Studies show that over 80% of marriages in the U.S. have an unfaithful partner. Children learn by example. What example is being set? Children who are abused tend to become abusers. By extension, might children of openly promiscuous parents take on these qualities as well?

But there are even more extreme forms of behavior happening in the home. Just as addiction to soft drugs leads to heavier drug use, experimenting with pornography leads to other perversions. Many couples are delving into alternative lifestyles. Becoming popular across the western world is the concept known as “swinging.” Couples meet other couples and each will then trade partners! Imagine the confusion a child would experience if exposed to such blatant immorality!

And God’s people need to watch out. Jesus said that last days would be like the days of Lot (Luke 17:28). Among the many other atrocities of that day, Jude says that Sodom and Gomorrah had given “themselves over to sexual immorality” and went after “strange flesh,” a reference to homosexuality (Jude 1:7). Paul, speaking about Israel’s soon entrance into the Promised Land and their departure from purity, warned Christians to not “commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.” He then offered the following: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

God’s people today have been warned to be on guard in the last days. We are on the brink of the Heavenly Promised Land and we don’t want to succumb to the same temptations that caused Israel to fall at Baal-Peor.

“As we approach the close of time, as the people of God stand upon the borders of the heavenly Canaan, Satan will, as of old, redouble his efforts to prevent them from entering the goodly land. He lays his snares for every soul. It is not the ignorant and uncultured merely that need to be guarded; he will prepare his temptations for those in the highest positions, in the most holy office; if he can lead them to pollute their souls, he can through them destroy many. And he employs the same agents now as he employed three thousand years ago. By worldly friendships, by the charms of beauty, by pleasure seeking, mirth, feasting, or the wine cup, he tempts to the violation of the seventh commandment.” (Patriarchs & Prophets, p. 457)

With David may we say, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” (Ps. 101:3)
Let’s make a covenant with our eyes, what do you say?

Thursday / Love Covers All

1 Peter 4:7-11

“Peter now closes his section on how to live as aliens and strangers in the world. He calls his readers to eschatological awareness—a consciousness of the imminence of judgment: “The end of all things is near” (1 Pet. 4:7, NIV). In view of this judgment,

Peter appeals for maintaining the mental clarity needed for effective prayer and, above all, for deep love for one another.

“He draws from Proverbs 10:12, stating that love covers a multitude of sins (compare with James 5:20), meaning that it “takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]” (1 Cor. 13:5, AMPC). God treats the believer with no less love. Our responsibility, therefore, is to “serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet. 4:10, NIV). This service is to be rendered “with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 4:11, NIV).”

Appeal: *“The love that suffers long and is kind will not magnify an indiscretion into an unpardonable offense, neither will it make capital of others’ misdoings. The Scriptures plainly teach that the erring are to be treated with forbearance and consideration. If the right course is followed, the apparently obdurate heart may be won to Christ. The love of Jesus covers a multitude of sins. His grace never leads to the exposing of another’s wrongs, unless it is a positive necessity.”* (Counsels, to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 267)