

1 Peter

Lesson 6 Chapter 4:1-11

Leader Guide

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Lesson 6

1 Peter 4:1-11

Living for God in the End Times

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death,
and you will be hated by all nations because of me.” Matthew 24:9

Prayers

Introduction

Jesus warned his followers to be aware of the signs of the end times. False prophets, war, famine, and earthquakes are the birth pains of the end times. These signs are followed by persecution, turning away from faith, betrayal, hatred, and wickedness. After the newscast one evening, I turned to my wife and said, we are truly living in the end of times. She turned and said in all seriousness, “I’m ready any time.” The only thing keeping us here is that the gospel must still reach all nations.

When Peter wrote his letter to the churches in Asia Minor, they must have felt they were also living in the end times. The persecution by Jewish leaders of newly converted Jewish Christians began immediately after Christ’s resurrection. Saul, who would later become the Apostle Paul, was one of the leaders of persecution – even murder. To escape the persecution in Jerusalem, many Jewish Christians left their homes and traveled more than 1000 miles, only to find – more persecution. After a few years of peace following Paul’s conversion, the persecution of Christians escalated under Roman emperors and governors from 50 AD to 311AD. Forms of persecution included beatings, imprisonment, confiscation of property, exile, being fed to beasts, crucifixion, burning at the stake, and even more unimaginable acts.

After two millennia, you probably do not feel like Christ’s coming is imminent, but Peter’s words encourage us to live in worthy expectation of his arrival.

Read 1 Peter 4:1-11, Living for God

^{1Pe 4:1} Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

^{1Pe 4:2} As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

^{1Pe 4:3} 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.

^{1Pe 4:4} They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

^{1Pe 4:5} But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

^{1Pe 4:6} For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

^{1Pe 4:7} The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

^{1Pe 4:8} Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

^{1Pe 4:9} Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

^{1Pe 4:10} Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

^{1Pe 4:11} If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it 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.

1. Paul and Peter both wrote about being free from sin. Compare 1 Peter 4:1-2 to Romans 6:10-13 and discuss how we are free from sin.

^{1Pe 4:1} Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

^{1Pe 4:2} As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

^{Ro 6:10} The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

^{Ro 6:11} In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

^{Ro 6:12} Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

^{Ro 6:13} Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

We are free from the condemnation of sin but not from the reality of it. The reality of sin is we struggle against it daily, but God does not leave us unable to resist it. He has given us his Spirit so that we will never be at peace with sin and gives us a way out from our temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13) – if we commit ourselves to his ways (Psalm 37:4). Sometimes, we fail. Still, God is eager and quick to forgive for the sake of his Son and because of his love for us, his children.

2. We are to live to do the will of God (verse 2). How would you state what is the will of God for your life? Also, refer to the following verses about God's will:

^{Ro 12:1} Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

^{Ro 12:2} Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

^{1Th 4:3} It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

^{1Th 4:4} that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable,

^{1Th 4:5} not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ^{1Th 4:6} and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him.

^{Jas 1:5} If any of you lacks wisdom [does not know the will of God], he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

The simplest statement of God's will for our lives is to have a loving relationship with him and others. This statement is from Jesus' teaching, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31)

There are also some other aspects of knowing God's will that should be mentioned. It is God's will for us to have faith in Christ as God's redeemed and holy children. God wants us to live holy lives so that all we do is a spiritual act of worship.

There are many events in life when we don't know God's will. Examples of these everyday events and decisions include employment, relationships, finances, major decisions, suffering, loss, and trials. God tells us to ask him for wisdom through prayer.

3. Peter includes a list of sins in verse 3 that sounds like a script for a college fraternity in Animal House: debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. Not every Christian engages in these activities, but we still live with "evil desires." What other sins, often associated with church people, would you include on the list?

The church is not exempt from any sin. We are shocked when we hear of church leaders, and members caught up in sins of homosexuality, marital affairs, or child abuse. Unfortunately, non-Christians often perceive us (the church) as hypocritical, judgmental, prideful, and plagued by division, quarrels, and jealousy. Lord, have mercy. Let us repent so that we truly live for the will of God.

4. Peter states the reality of judgment in verse 4:5. One of the curious beliefs adopted by our society and many Christians is that we will gain eternal life in heaven by being good enough. How would you challenge someone's thinking with the truth of scripture? After giving the question some thought, refer to Acts 4:12, John 3:16, John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Titus 3:4.

The view of salvation by being "good enough" is widespread because it is a view of self rather than of Christ. Scriptures point to salvation by Christ alone. A few examples are the following:

Salvation is found in no one else [but Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3:4)

5. Verse 6 is another verse with various interpretations. The dead who received the gospel may be the earliest Christians who passed away or the souls in hell Peter referred to in verse 3:19.

This verse could lead to many distractions in the lesson. Leaders should use their best judgment.

6. Verses 7-11 are Peter's instructions for living in the end times. What actions did he consider most important for believers to do in the last days?

- a. Verse 7 **Be clear-minded, self-controlled, and pray.**
- b. Verse 8 **Love each other**
- c. Verse 9 **Offer hospitality**
- d. Verse 10 **Know your spiritual gifts and use them faithfully**
- e. Verse 11 **Serve**

7. What actions from the list in verses 7-11 do you do to build up the church?

Peter's instructions are for each believer to exercise all the actions, but like all spiritual gifts, we excel in some more than others.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19, Suffering for being a Christian

^{1Pe 4:12} Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

^{1Pe 4:13} But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

^{1Pe 4:14} If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

^{1Pe 4:15} If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

^{1Pe 4:16} However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

^{1Pe 4:17} For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

^{1Pe 4:18} And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

^{1Pe 4:19} So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Discuss

8. Why might a Christian be surprised by suffering or abuse?

Some Christians might believe they are shielded from suffering, but this was not an example of Christ, the apostles, or the early church.

9. How have you participated in the suffering of Christ? What does it mean to take up his cross in your life?

I admit that I have not felt that I suffered for Christ. Perhaps I have been slow to testify for him. Tithing, charitable giving, and service are the biggest sacrifices I make, but I don't count these as a sacrifice. They have been blessings. I think one part of taking up our cross is setting aside our schedule to meet the needs of others. There are countless Christian charities we can serve to help meet the needs of others.

About one out of every seven or eight Christians face real persecution in the church worldwide. Punishments for worshipping Christ include death, beatings, prison, job loss, and discrimination. Women can be abused and forced to marry men of different religions.

10. How might your life look if you lived expecting Christ's imminent return?

If I lived with the expectation of Christ's immediate return, I would feel compelled to go to my friends and family members who are not Christian and implore them to accept Christ as God's Son and their Savior. I would be quick to respond to the needs of others and be more generous in charity. I would be more focused on things with eternal value; deepening relationships with others, service to others, and how I can use my God-given gifts to advance his kingdom.

Closing Prayer