

Christian Living in Today's Culture

Finding Answers in 1 Peter



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PART 7: MAINTAINING HEALTHY CHRISTIAN LIVES

1 PETER 4:7—5:14



Peter now describes how to live a healthy Christian life, especially while living in a culture that is either indifferent or opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and his church. He emphasizes the need for Christians to use their gifts, to respond properly to opposition, to be humble at all times, and to resist the enemy.

A. Use your gift (4:7-11 ESV)

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various form. 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."

1. When you hear someone say, "The end of all things is near" how do you usually respond?
2. What did Peter mean by "the strength God provides" when referring to "gifts"?

B. Be prepared to suffer (4:12-19)

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

1. According to Peter how are believers to responding to insults or suffering because they follow Christ?

C. Instructions to the leaders (5:1-4)

"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

1. Why does God give such stringent standards for leadership? (see Jas. 3:1 for teachers)
2. Can anyone live up to those requirements?
3. Should public/civil leaders be held to the same standards? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean that Jesus is the "Chief Shepherd"?

D. Humble yourselves (5:5-7)

"In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

1. According to Peter, what is involved in exhibiting true humility?
2. What does it mean to cast your anxiety on God? Why is this sometimes difficult to do?

E. Resist the enemy (5:8-10)

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

1. How does Peter describe the devil here?
2. What is the Christian's defense against this diabolical enemy?
3. What does James 4:7 tell us about this?