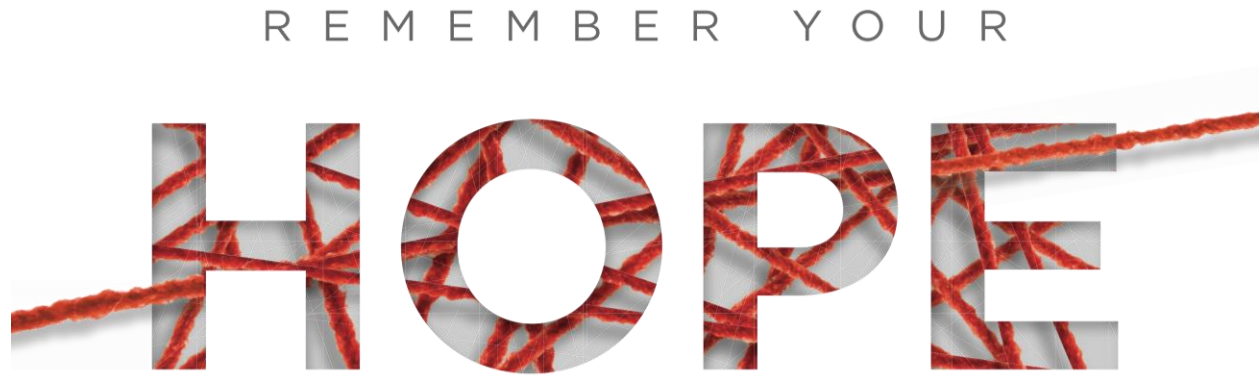


Lesson 7: 1 Peter 4:1–11

Hook



Main Point: When we live holy lives and love others, God is glorified.

New product launches always carry a bit of risk—how will consumers receive the new product? Below are six actual products that were met with less-than-enthusiastic reviews and four items that were never developed. Gather in small groups and attempt to identify which of the products listed were developed and placed on the market and which are fictional.

- A. Cheetos Lip Balm
- B. Exxon Spring Water
- C. Touch of Yogurt Shampoo
- D. Colgate Kitchen Entrées (frozen meals)
- E. Muppet Lunch Meats
- F. Sony Saxophones
- G. Harley Davidson Perfume
- H. Hot Wheels Computers
- I. Pedigree Baby Teething Rings
- J. Life Savers Sodaⁱ

Actual Products: A, C, D, G, H, J

Transition: Today we will discuss how friends and family react when someone becomes a believer and the challenges those receptions might bring.

Book

Main Point: When we live holy lives and love others, God is glorified.

Text Summary: Our old lifestyle of sin is in the past. Family and friends who still live that lifestyle may not understand the changes in our new life. They may even tease us or slander us for it. But we are to continue to live as kingdom people no matter what they say, and one day, God will vindicate us for staying faithful to Him. As kingdom people, we are to love each other earnestly with the love God has shown us, show hospitality without grumbling, and use our God-given gifts to glorify Him, edify the Church, and build His kingdom.

1 Peter 4:1–6 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Your lifestyle of sin is in the past.

Q: How is your life different now than it was before you accepted Christ?

Q: Why are our old friends surprised when we don't want to live that old lifestyle of sin?

Peter encourages them to “arm yourselves with the same way of thinking” (v. 1). This is a reminder that life is a spiritual battle, and we must arm ourselves for it (Ephesians 6:10–18). Specifically, we are to arm ourselves by the transformation that comes with allowing God to renew our minds, changing our way of thinking to align with His (Romans 12:1–2). The battle starts in our minds, doesn't it? Jesus said even thinking lustfully about someone is committing adultery in your heart (Matthew 5:28) and that the things which defile us are the things that come from our hearts and minds (Matthew 15:18). Paul writes that our battle is one of arguments, opinions and thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:4–6). He encourages us to fight this battle by setting our mind on godly things (Colossians 3:2), to think about whatever is pure and lovely (Philippians 4:8), and to take captive *every* thought to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Holy Spirit has given us the mind of Christ, so we must arm ourselves with His thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Peter says those who have suffered in the flesh have “ceased from sin” (1 Peter 4:1), not that they will never struggle with temptation again, but that they, like all believers, have been set free from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:1–14; 8:1–11). Sin still exists in the world. There are still temptations, and we will still fail sometimes. But God has made us a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). He has changed our hearts so that we no longer desire evil; we desire good (Romans 7:13–20). As Peter writes, we no longer live for human passions, but for the will of God (1 Peter 4:2). Though evil is still a temptation, it no longer rules over us; it no longer has dominion over us (Romans 6:14).

But Peter is talking not just about Christians in general. He is talking about those who have endured suffering for their faith. Remember, Peter was writing to people who were being

persecuted, encouraging them to put their hope in their inheritance of heaven (1 Peter 1:4). Throughout this whole letter, he reminds them to keep this eternal perspective, that what they are suffering now is nothing compared to the glory they will receive in God's future kingdom (Romans 8:18). Peter tells them to change their thinking about their suffering, to be conformed to the thinking of Christ—that our sufferings are a deep blessing because they unite us to Christ in His sufferings and keep us from sin (6:1–11). This is not a special gift for those who are under persecution, like a “next-level Christianity.” Peter is explaining that suffering unites us to Christ, the Righteous One.ⁱⁱ

Though we are still tempted by sin, our *lifestyle* of sin is in the past (1 Peter 4:3). Our love for sin is in the past. We no longer *desire* sin but desire God's will for our lives (4:2). Peter's examples may seem extreme. We may read this and think, “Well, I was never like that!” But this is an example for this particular context. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of every possible element of a “sinful past.” Peter uses these examples because drunken orgies were the way many pagans celebrated festivals to their gods, like the gods and goddesses of wine and fertility. This example was quite relevant to the people to whom Peter was writing.ⁱⁱⁱ We most likely have other things we have left behind in our sinful pasts.

Q: What are some examples of lifestyle choices you may leave behind when you become a Christian? Not just “I stopped doing drugs,” but more subtle changes, too?

We, too, may have friends who don't understand our new life in Christ and make fun of us for our new lifestyle choices or even slander us (v. 4). But Peter encourages us to stand firm against those who speak badly about us for following Christ. In chapters 2 *and* 3, he told his readers to keep their conduct honorable, no matter what people said (2:12; 3:16). These Gentiles who had become Christians were being slandered by their community, even by friends and family, for leaving the pagan life. When they became Christians, they no longer wanted to participate in the pagan ceremonies and celebrations, which at first just upset their friends, but later led to their persecution by the government.^{iv}

Q: Have you ever experienced teasing or even slander from your friends or family for becoming a Christian or getting more serious about living out your faith? Share some examples if you feel comfortable.

Q: Why do you think people do that? How should you respond?

As he has several times before in this letter, Peter encourages his readers to stand firm in doing what is right no matter what anyone else says. He points again to their keeping an eternal perspective, but this time regarding the eternal fate of those who slander them. He says they may be slandering you now, but on Judgment Day, they will have to give an account for themselves before God. On Judgment Day, those who were faithful to Christ will be vindicated, and those who slandered them will be punished (Psalm 34:21–22). This is why the Gospel was preached, “even to those who are dead,” meaning believers who had heard and believed the Gospel during their lifetime but were dead by the time Peter was writing. He writes this to

encourage them that those who have died in the faith will live eternally. Though they were “judged in the flesh as men,” meaning they were *physically* put to death for their faith, they will live *in the spirit*. This is even more assurance to hold firm to their faith and to do good, no matter how much they are persecuted. Keep that eternal perspective, because one day they will be condemned, and you will be vindicated, and the glorious inheritance of eternal life will far outweigh any suffering we endure in this life.^v

Q: Why is it difficult to hold firm to the eternal promises when life now is hard?

Q: What practical things can you do to stand firm in your faith when those around you tease or even persecute you?

1 Peter 4:7–9 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Your new lifestyle is to live as kingdom people.

Q: Why does Peter say we should be self-controlled and sober-minded?

Q: How does Peter describe this new life compared to the old one? How would you summarize it in your own words?

Peter encourages these persecuted Christians to hold fast and stay true to the Lord because “the end of all things is at hand” (v. 7). This doesn’t necessarily mean Peter thought Jesus was coming back in the next few days. Jesus said even He did not know when He would return (Mark 13:32). The phrase is used here historically to refer to the entire Church Age, the time between Christ’s First and Second Coming, as “the end of all things.” We are living in “the end times” whether the Judgment Day is next year or a thousand years off because we are in “the end” of God’s story of salvation. We are in the final act.^{vi}

But the imminent arrival of the end is not a green light to cease all action and simply wait with hands folded for Jesus’ return.^{vii} Instead, Peter spurs believers on to kingdom action in the here and now. Peter encourages the recipients of his letter—live as if you were in that future kingdom now, even if everyone else around you is still “of this world.” You are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Peter uses contrasts to the examples of their past he gave before. “Self-controlled and sober-minded” (1 Peter 4:7) are contrasted with living in sensuality and passions and drunkenness (v. 4). Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, something the Spirit grows in us over time as we walk with Him as kingdom people (Galatians 5:22–25). Being sober-minded isn’t really about abstaining from alcohol (though the Bible *does* forbid drunkenness). It means keeping your mind focused on Christ, letting Him control your thoughts. It is being used as a metaphor in the same way Paul tells believers to be “drunk with the Spirit” rather than drunk with wine (Ephesians 5:18). It’s about to who/what you are giving control of your mind. When you get drunk, you give up control of your mind to the alcohol; when you are “drunk with the Spirit” you give up control of

your mind to the Spirit. Even better than controlling our own mind is letting the Spirit control our thoughts, giving us the mind of Christ.^{viii} Both self-control and having the mind of Christ are crucial to godly prayer. Believers cannot pray properly if their minds are consumed with the things of this world. But when we set our minds on things above, when we meditate on God's Word, we are able to pray in communion with God the Father, according to His will.^{ix}

Peter highlights loving one another and hospitality without grumbling. Love, above all else, characterizes the life of a disciple of Jesus, a citizen of heaven (John 13:35). Peter doesn't criticize the way they have loved each other up to this point; he says *keep* loving one another earnestly, encouraging them to continue loving one another the way they have been. The word translated "earnestly" here literally means "to stretch," as an athlete or horse stretching to run at maximum speed. As believers love one another earnestly, the world will see a beautiful picture of God's love. Hospitality refers to welcoming strangers, which takes that love beyond the family of God to the whole world. God's law commanded His people to show hospitality to strangers, to provide food, clothing and shelter (Deuteronomy 10:18–19). Peter adds "without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9) because believers are to serve others with a cheerful heart, not out of obligation or compulsion, but out of love.

As kingdom people, we are to love as God loves, with radical, selfless, *agape* love. Love is "above all" because all other things we do are rooted in love (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). As God's love in Christ covered a multitude of our sins (1 Peter 4:8), so Christians' love for one another will show grace and mercy and forgiveness of any sins between us.^x When we love one another earnestly, even those who are very different from us, and serve others with joy and a cheerful heart, the world takes notice. The Church should look so different from the world that people are attracted to it, saying, "I want to be loved like that. How can I get that kind of love?"

Q: How can we make a daily habit of setting our minds on Christ?

Q: In what specific ways can you be better about loving your brothers and sisters in Christ? What about showing hospitality to strangers?

Q: In what ways do we need to change in order to show God's love to the world?

1 Peter 4:10–11 [Read]

Talking Point 3: When we serve others using our gifts, God is glorified.

Q: How is God glorified when we use our unique God-given gifts?

Q: Why is it important that we serve the kingdom in our specific areas of giftedness?

In this context of how believers in the Church are to behave with one another, Peter briefly addresses how they were to use the specific gifts God has given each one of them to serve the body of Christ. Paul discusses this more fully in his letters when he talks about the Church's

being like a body, each part being equally important and needing each other to make the whole body work (1 Corinthians 12:12–31). These gifts are not given to us for our own pleasure and enjoyment or to make money or a name for ourselves. They were given to edify the body, “to serve one another” (1 Peter 4:10), or as Paul writes, to edify the Church, to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

Paul calls us “stewards” of these gifts we have been given. In ancient times, a steward managed his master’s property. He didn’t own any of the property; he was just the manager of it. A master might give a steward incentives to encourage him to do a good job, but if the steward made money on an investment or grew a larger harvest or made similar gains, the profit wasn’t his to keep. It still belonged to the master. He did it all for the master and his estate. In the parable of the faithful steward, the “talents” the stewards were given to invest were a unit of money, but most scholars agree that it is appropriate to broaden the interpretation to more, to whatever resources God has given you—money, time, talent, gifts, influence, abilities. All we are and all we have belong to God and should be used to invest in His kingdom and His glory (Colossians 3:17).^{xi}

Peter believes *every single person* in the Church has been given a gift by God, and every single person needs to be using that gift in ministry (1 Peter 4:10). Paul writes the same—everyone has a gift. There is not one ungifted person in the Church. There is not one part of the body that is supposed to just sit there. Every single part needs to be working in its own unique way, serving its unique function in the body. If every part doesn’t do its job, the body is weakened. When your leg is broken, the whole rest of your body has to work harder to overcome that weakness. The same thing is true of the body of Christ. Statistics say that 20 percent of the people in a church do 80 percent of the work of the church. If you had a heart running at only 20 percent, that would be considered heart *failure*. Imagine if only 20 percent of your body were working. *Every part* of the body needs to be working, using its own God-given gifts, for this body to work.

The focus in these verses is on God. *God* gives the gifts (1 Peter 4:10). We are stewards *of God’s* grace (4:10). We speak “oracles” *of God*. (v. 11). (*Oracles* simply means “words of God,” so this phrase is referring to the preaching and teaching of God’s Word.) We serve *by God’s* strength (v. 11). We do all these things through the power, strength and grace of God. So God is the one who is glorified when we do good things (Matthew 5:16). And Peter ends with a short line of praise, as if he can’t help but burst out in song whenever he talks about God’s being glorified (v. 11). As believers who are looking forward in hope to our glorious future inheritance, we know that all that we do on this earth is through God and for God. Our whole purpose is to glorify Him and build His kingdom.

Q: What specific gifts has God given you? How can you use them to build up the Church and to grow and serve the kingdom of God?

Q: How would your life be different if you thought of everything you had (not just money, but time, talent, family, resources, etc.) as belonging to God and yourself as just a steward?

Q: How can you encourage other people to use their gifts to glorify God?

Took

Main Point: When we live holy lives and love others, God is glorified.

What tools do you use to organize your day? What does your calendar look like this week? Consider the challenges that today's passage has presented to you: using your gifts, showing hospitality, making the most of the time that you have. Before you go to sleep tonight, calendar times this week in which you plan to use your gifts and demonstrate love to someone else. Perhaps it's inviting a neighbor to your home, serving in the church or visiting someone who is alone. Whatever you choose to do, calendar it and do it this week.

CHALLENGES

THINK: *How can I use my specific God-given gifts to glorify God?* What resources has He given me—skills, gifts, talents, family, friendships, influences, career, etc.? How can I use my gifts to build up the Church? How can I use my gifts to reach out to the world for Jesus, to live missionally? In what ways is God calling me to participate in His mission?

PRAY: *For self-control and a sober mind.* It is only the Spirit who grows self-control in us, and it is only the Spirit who can give us the mind of Christ. Pray fervently for the Spirit to work in your life and change you from the inside out. Also spend time studying and meditating on His Word to develop the mind of Christ, to know what Christ would say and think and do.

ACT: *Practice hospitality.* Choose one person outside of your circle of friends, outside of your church family, to whom you can be hospitable this week. That might mean inviting that person to your house or out to lunch. It might mean providing something for someone in need—food, clothing or shelter. It might mean listening to someone who needs a friend. Choose any way in which you can make someone feel welcomed, loved and served.

ⁱ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/07/11/50-worst-product-flops-of-all-time/36734837/>

ⁱⁱ H. D. M. Spence, Joseph S. Exell, ed. *1 Peter, The Pulpit Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985).

ⁱⁱⁱ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994).

^{iv} John MacArthur, *1 Peter, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 230.

^v John MacArthur, *1 Peter, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 231.

^{vi} Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter, NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 155–6.

^{vii} Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2411.

^{viii} T. W. Hunt, *The Mind of Christ: The Transforming Power of Thinking His Thoughts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 1997).

^{ix} John MacArthur, *1 Peter, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 241.

^x Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter, NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 155–6.

^{xi} Craig Keener, *A Commentary on The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 1999).