



“Homestretch Living”

1 Peter 4

Small Group Plan

Peter writes to churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in the decade of the 60’s at a time when being a Christian could easily bring hardship, even persecution. This is clear from Peter’s words “*now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials*” (1:6). Living in an antagonistic environment could tempt Christians to pull back and live in isolation. But to live among an unsaved people and make a spiritual difference, these early Christians had to have a healthy understanding of separation. Joseph Aldrich warns:

Separation is not isolation from unredeemed mankind; rather it is separation from acts of personal sin and separation unto God. Some churches today are similar to a department store where all the employees arrive at the prescribed time, lock the doors, and then sell merchandise to each other all day. To do any good, salt has to not only get out of the shaker, but it must come into contact with the food. Otherwise, it is useless.

— From *Life-Style Evangelism*

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How do we avoid becoming the religious “department store”?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— BE LOVING —

1 Peter 4:7-8

⁷The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

- What was the emotional response when Peter’s audience read, “*the end of all things is near*”?
- The meaning of the term translated “*sober mind*” in verse 7 literally means to be “*self-controlled*” or “*careful*” or “*in balance.*” What is the connection between being “*alert and of sober mind*” and prayer?
- Why was it particularly important for the Christians at this time to extend “*love*” and forgiveness to each other?

— **BE LIBERAL** —

1 Peter 4:9

⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

- Define the concept of “hospitality” in its original, first-century sense.
- As a “scattered” (1:1), poor and oppressed people, why would hospitality be particularly important?
- In the face of human need, what would cause “grumbling”?

— **BE LAVISH** —

1 Peter 4:10

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.

- All of our “gifts” come from God. What happens when we forget or ignore this fact and become proud of our skills, abilities or opportunities?
- The word “charismatic” is one of those biblical terms that has been hijacked and very narrowly defined. As a result, it is very misunderstood today. To be charismatic literally means to be “graced” or “gifted” by God.
- With this in mind how would you describe the purpose of God’s “gifts”?
- How would you describe the honor of being “stewards of God’s grace”?

— **BE LEARNING** —

1 Peter 4:11

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.

- Peter mentions two forms of leadership — speaking and serving. Why are both important?
- Peter says both should draw upon the “words” and the “strength” of God. What happens when either style of leadership draws upon their own words and their own strength?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Persecution is a part of life for Christians in several parts of our current world. If you lived in one of these places ...
 - ... what questions would you be asking God?
 - ... what help would you want from your Christian brothers and sisters?
 - ... how would you hope to be responding to your antagonists?

- How can hostility from those on the outside create conflicts among those on the inside?
- How have you observed the “*various forms*” of God’s “*grace*” (v. 10) being used in ministry to people? List some of the numerous forms of ministry you have seen at work in God’s church.
- Why do some Christians think they have very little to offer? How does Peter speak to this (v. 10)?
- What does prideful and arrogant leadership look like? How does it sound? Who does it serve?
- Close with prayer, asking God for the faithfulness to be both humble and confident in times of difficulty.