

Series: Different

Sermon #8

The Church's "Prep" List

1 Peter 4:7-11

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- October 31, 2021

Operation Christmas Child Video

Link: <https://video.samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child-overview-2021-promotional/>

[Various speakers comment on Operation Christmas Child.]

The joy of seeing a child open the boxes for the first time is incredible.

We are so excited! Many of the children ?? for the first time.

We pray that these boxes will spread a lot of happiness and joy--but more important, the gospel to each part, all of these little children around the world.

There is no greater need and no greater time than right now for us to go out and serve boldly. This is what these shoeboxes are all about, to go out and bring the hope of Jesus Christ around the world.

I'm just so amazed at what God does each and every year. This is an opportunity to impact the lives of many children, just like you've seen. But we need more boxes for next year. Every box is an opportunity for us to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, thank you. And God bless each and every one.

Good morning, Grace. It's a great day to be here. We're starting the Operation Christmas Child. This is this thing we've been doing for well over twenty years. I bet we've sent 100,000 boxes or more around the world. What a Christmas gift! So, if you guys could make it a point to go out to the courtyard and get a couple of boxes, fill those up full of the list of goodies that you might want someone to enjoy, and they're going to bring those gifts with the gospel as well, all over the world. It's kind of fun.

Update on Summer of Giving and Fall of Serving

If you'll turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4, I'll be there in a minute. But I want to give you an update. I promised I'd give you an update on our Summer of Giving and our Fall of Serving campaign. We did that to just acknowledge that maybe during our quarantine and pandemic time we might have turned in on ourselves and were just kind of protecting ourselves. And we've got to get back in shape and start giving out and serving others. And it's just a good thing to do, and it's fun to do it as a team.

And so, the plan was that everything given to the church over our budgeted expenses that we planned before this campaign even started would be given out to ministries around the city and around the world. So, we've already given out \$232,000. That's ain't bad—give yourselves a hand. And then, I said last week that we had an additional \$305,000 to give away, which meant that we were going to give over \$500,000 from just the Summer of Giving. Yeah.

But there's been an update. Hey, have you ever put on an old pair of pants or something and you reach in your pocket—*There's a twenty-dollar bill! This is awesome!* That kind of happened, except the twenty-dollar bill was a \$200,000 bill. So, we're actually giving away over \$700,000 for our campaign for the summer. Yeah, baby!

And I'll tell you more next week where it's going. This week we wanted to focus on some ministries that are local. These are also places that are really great to serve in if you're looking for a place to volunteer.

We're giving \$5,000 to the English Language Ambassadors. This is a ministry that got started just a few years ago, but boy, for such a time as this. They're teaching Afghanis English as a second language. And so, now, business is good. So, this is a beautiful ministry, and we have a relationship with the leaders there that goes back almost thirty years. I love this group, the English Language Ambassadors.

We're giving \$15,000 to God of Hope ministries. This is a ministry to prisoners that are being held locally. And it's a ministry for the men and the women. Many of our leaders here at Grace Covenant Church are part of the leadership team at that vital place. And so, if you want to be involved in that—helping people that are incarcerated become like Christ in all of life—that's what they're doing, and doing a great job, too.

And finally, Austin Disaster Relief Network. I'm sure most of you are familiar with that ministry. It's like our own Red Cross here in Austin, and they're actually looking at going national because it's so effective. Well, they're moving their office, and their main location is going to move up to MoPac and Wells Branch Parkway or so. And they need money for that expensive move and remodel. And so, we're going to give them \$100,000. Yeah. Give yourselves a hand.

Ray Anderson plays Santa Claus around here. He called them just last week and they picked up, because we have a great relationship with ADRN. And the ADRN leader said, "Ray, what's up? I'm in the middle of a board meeting."

He said, "Well, I'm glad you are. I'm calling to tell you that we're going to give a \$100,000 towards your move." And that was the topic of discussion. So, they were very happy for that.

Well, keep up the great work. Next week I'm going to let you know about some things that have been cooking for almost over a year now that we're finally going to be able to reveal. Next week I'll tell you more about our Summer of Giving and where we're going to send these resources. Let me pray, and we'll just thank God for what He's done in our church so far.

Lord, we do lift up the way You've blessed us to bless others, the way that You've given to us so that we can give to others. And what a joy it is to see ministries around the world and around this town where we can influence people for the cause of Christ. And sometimes it's in areas where we don't know what to do, we don't know how to do it, but there are people who do. And so, we want them to be less concerned about finances and more concerned about how to please You and how to use their gifts. So, Lord, we lift these ministries to You. And for every dollar that we give, Lord, I'd ask that You would return two to five dollars on spiritual return. We ask that You bless these men and women that do these ministries. Keep them whole and healthy. Do not let them grow tired of doing good. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Are You Prepared?

All right, let's look at our passage today in 1 Peter chapter 4. It's verses 7 through 11. There was a TV series—it's over now—it was on National Geographic, and it was a big hit for four seasons. It was called *Doomsday Preppers*. Has anybody seen that? Apparently, millions of

people watched it, and it kind of got a little thing going about *Are you ready?* That's their big byline. *Are you ready? Are you prepared? Doomsday preppers, are you prepared for some kind of natural disaster or man-made disaster? Are you going to make it? Do you have a bunker? No? Ha!*

And since that, tens of thousands, millions of dollars, have been spent by individuals making sure that they were prepared, they were prepped and ready for that next big thing. And it started a movement. *Are you prepared?* Because you never know when the end of the world is. I mean, the end of the world is near.

If you were watching F1 last week, the Formula One racing, and you saw me down on the infield in one of those sandwich board things that you wear and it just said, "The End Is Near," and I have a giant sign that says "Repent;" if you saw me walking around down there and maybe somebody in your house says, "Hey, yeah, isn't that Pastor Matt? Aren't you friends with him?"--What would you say? "Nah, I don't know, I don't know who that guy is. That guy's crazy, and so, yeah, let's watch something else."

Because, right? Just saying "the end is near" pretty much qualifies you for not being entirely well. Today, here's the thing. That's how Peter starts the passage today. He says, "The end of all things is near." And he's not saying this to just get attention and maybe draw people to do things for no other reason than I'll just say that to get you motivated. If you look at the New Testament, there are only four books that do NOT mention that imminent end of all of history. The New Testament begins in the Book of Matthew, where three chapters in John the Baptist is saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" The last book of the Bible, Revelation, ends with Jesus saying, "Yes, and I'm coming soon." And John says, "Yeah, amen, come, Lord Jesus."

So, you're going to see in the newer Testament over and over again that it says that the end is near. Here at Grace we believe in what's called the imminent return of Jesus Christ. And what "imminent" means is "anytime," without warning. It could be right now. Kind of theologically we're in an era or a dispensation called the last days. And that's how the whole New Testament is written. It is in the last days, and the job description for people in this era is to anxiously await the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

So, who says "Be prepared"? Well, Paul says it and John says it, and James says it and Peter says it. And they're not crazy. Paul says, "Time is running out, the Lord is near." That's in

Romans. James says, “Strengthen your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is near.” Peter says, “The end of all things is near. Be prepared.”

Five Ways to Prepare for the End Times

And so, today Grace—actually, the whole Church—here are five ways to respond to the soon return of Jesus Christ. Here are five disciplines or principles for you to be prepared. Are you prepared? Do these five things. It’ll make the Church healthy and whole, it will help you live a life without regret in the next life.

So, here they are. These are the things that Peter learned from watching Jesus. In the context of his persecution, in the context of the disciples being scattered—and in Peter’s life, the Christians are being scattered all over Rome and they’re being persecuted by Nero. And he’s saying, *This is how you prep yourself. You need to sharpen up your thinking. You pray intelligent prayers. You love unceasingly. You look for ways of expressing even costly hospitality. You’re using your spiritual gifts that God is giving you, and all of this is for the glory of God the Father.* All of that. That’s what it means to be prepped. That’s how to live in a way when you waiting upon the Lord.

1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgement and sober spirit for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look what it says in verses 7 through 11. I’ll read the whole thing and then we’ll look at it individually. “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgement and sober spirit for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a

multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever.” And all God's people said—“Amen.”

“The end of all things is at hand”—Peter says this not to shock or even scare anyone. Actually, these words are not a threat; these are very encouraging words. He's saying, *Look, in the context of our lives right now*—they're living in a form of poverty, they're being persecuted, they're being lied about and hunted, scattered all around—he's saying, *Hey, it's temporary. It's not going to last long.*

Some of you have said these very things to maybe someone that you've loved in the last days or weeks of their life. And they're struggling, and you're saying, *Hey, it won't be much longer. You'll be home soon.*

So, that's what he's saying here. *Don't worry.* And the point of this, and Paul and James, and the other authors that write about the end times, the obvious application is that we're supposed to be living for the next life, and this life is not very long in comparison. It's called having an eternal perspective and it's supposed to alter your lifestyle. You're supposed to be making decisions in the here and now, the ever-so-temporal here and now, so that you don't regret forever those decisions. Living for eternity means living like today could echo into eternity. That's why we do the giving that we do. That's why we do the serving that we do. That's why we do most everything we do.

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgement and sober spirit for the sake of your prayers.

So, now he's going to say that these are the five principles of being prepared for the return of Christ. These are the five. Verse 7 has three of them. “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgement and sober spirit for the sake of your prayers.”

1. Remain Calm

The first attribute, he says, is just to remain calm. Just remain calm. He says “of sound judgement.” Some translations will say “Be coolheaded.” It means to have a balanced mind. Some will say self-control—have self-control over your thoughts and over your actions. Don’t be afraid. Don’t panic. Don’t let emotions be driving your decisions. That’s the first one.

2. Stay Focused

And the second one is similar to that, but different. He says, Stay focused. “Sound judgement”, and then he says of “sober spirit.” Now, while one type of thinking is balanced, the other is more like looking over the horizon and being alert. That’s what the word means—alert. Be spiritually discerning, taking into account that we are not alone here, that we live in a world that’s spiritual and physical. Have a sharp mind.

One writer says this: **“Having sound judgment and a sober spirit means when natural disaster hits, you don’t panic; or when an official gets elected you don’t like, or the nightly news seems packed with bad news. Don’t worry.”** Why don’t we worry? Because we know that there is a sovereign Creator who loves us and is an all-knowing God and is still running the universe. And so, we’re not going to have emotions that other people have, because we have thoughts that are focused and sober.

It’s an acknowledgement in our minds that there are secular and spiritual forces at work in our lives right now. And they are making up panics, or they are taking advantage or some kind of tragedy for no other reason than to divide things that are sacred—families and churches. Politicians, media, social media, could not care less about what is true. They are in it to stay in power or gain power, and stay wealthy or gain wealth. And a person that is sober-minded and has a sober spirit backs up and says, *Wait a minute. There’s more here than meets the eye. I need to see what God’s doing.*

And what happens is, when you think about in the afterlife—you can do this as kind of an application when you go home—just close your eyes and picture yourself after the grave. Right? In the very presence of God. And then start thinking about and making an inventory of the things you’re obsessed about, worried about, angry about, in this life. And when you’re in that throne

room and you look back at this life, please don't be saying things like you were compulsive about how much money you had in savings, or where you ranked on the ladder of success, or that you were angry that churches were opening too soon or too late, or they're not doing it right, not according to me. *Wait, what? That's what I spent my energy on?*

Because when you get there to heaven, looking back at the life you had, you could say, *I should've seized that moment of ministry. There was so much ministry available.* Because other people don't have the foundations and the promises of God. And they don't know about the nature of God. *I kept my head through that. I was able to stay sober-spirited. And I could reach out to other people. It wasn't about me.* That's how this is applied.

The end is near, he says. Be prepared.

3. Keep Praying Intelligently

His third skill here is to pray intelligently. Keep praying intelligently. Look how our thoughts are actually setting up our prayers. He says, **“Therefore be of sound judgement and sober minded for the sake of your prayers.”** The sound judgment and sober mind is so that your prayers are intelligent.

I mean, picture this. A little girl runs up to her mom and says, “Mommy, I was watching the news and it was raining everywhere all the time. Can we pray that God won't flood the earth again? We've got to pray that.”

And Mommy says, “No, we're not going to pray that. And do you know why we don't have to pray that? Because God made a promise about that.”

Somebody comes up and says, “Daddy, Daddy, look at all of these people getting away with whatever they want. They're smug and arrogant. And there's no consequence, there's no justice.” And then I would say—that could have been a prayer I prayed earlier ... today—“Let's pray for justice!” Why? There's a promise in the Bible that God's going to take care of it. No one's getting away with anything. *No one knows what goes on behind closed doors*—that old country western song? Yeah, I think God does. Everybody will be answering for that. It's a promise from God.

And so, an application is to be wise in your prayers and study the promises of God so that you're not trying to pray something that He's already promised. Spend time with men and women who are older than you in the faith, who know the promises of God and know the nature

of God, so that you can spend less time anxiously trying to—I don't know—ask God for something that He's already promised. And if your current life and circumstances are confusing, pray about it. If you feel like the world is coming unglued, sure—you pray about that.

So many times in the Bible, multiple times in the Bible, it says to strategically watch with discernment, and then pray. Watch and pray.

I feel like this little section of advice is a bit of a flashback from Peter concerning his biggest regret in his life. And I think that if we asked around, most of us would say that the biggest regret in his life was when he denied Jesus Christ three times. But I don't think that's what Peter's big regret was. It precedes that. He had an individual invitation by the King. Jesus Christ says, "Peter, you need to come with me into the Garden of Gethsemane. We need to pray. You come and pray with me." And the problem with Peter was that he did not have sound judgment. He was not sober in spirit. He was drunk on ego. He was trusting in his own abilities and his own bravado. And Jesus says to him, "Peter, the devil has asked to sift you like wheat. You need to come and pray." And Peter is thinking, *What could happen to me?*

What could happen to you? A sixty-five-pound girl wearing a pink dress is going to ask you a question and she's going to crack you like a peanut. You're going to be in a corner crying, wishing you'd never been born. And he missed that. He didn't pray.

Praying prepares you for battle. That's what Peter learned. Praying prepares you for battle. And he missed that. You can pray in the middle of a temptation—sure, you bet. But the prep work goes ahead of that. Otherwise, you're going to show up with a knife to a gunfight. You came unarmed.

And so, Peter is saying here, *Look, take this one from me. Trust me. You don't want to live with the regret that I've had to live with. You remain calm, you have a sober mind, and then constantly pray intelligently. And you could have a life without regrets.*

You know, when we looked at 1 Peter chapter 2—that was months ago—but if you remember, Peter said something kind of like what we say. We say that every believer is a minister here. Peter said that every believer is a priest. So, we're all priests. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you're a priest. And one of the job descriptions of a priest is to pray. You talk to God about our fellow man. And so, Peter is saying here, *Look, I told you before that you're a priest; I'm telling you now, pray like a priest. Pray like you're God-ordained to do this.*

And here's what I think we need to do. We combine these things. Grace, we need to do this. We need to be the lighthouse in the middle of this crazy storm. We need to be that beacon that is set on a foundation of solid stone and not be caught up in the waves, the crazy dramas that are being made up to keep us afraid or angry; or the dramas that are real but they're still getting milked for that.

Peter is saying, *Stay on the mission of the Church, the supremacy of the Gospel, the glory of God the Father. Stay calm. Stay sober. Keep praying. Don't get lost in all of these distractions.*

4. Continue Loving Deeply

The fourth survival tip for being prepared: he says to continue loving deeply. Continue loving deeply. **“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”** Earnestly—you heard me emphasize that word there. It means “fervently,” it means “deeply.” Graphically, it's used outside the Bible in Greek as a horse in full gallop. All of its muscles are stretching. Even better—I love this picture, because it's a sprinter coming into the finish line hitting the tape. It's like, *[sound of great effort]*. Earnestly, love earnestly. And so, I find myself loving some people like that, like *[sound of great effort]*. *This is lllloove! This is earnest love.* Anybody identify with that? Anyway ... not all love is smiling.

But look at the power of love that he brings up. Why would you love earnestly? Because he says that love has power. Love covers a multitude of sins. What he's saying here is that love is bigger than injury. And the more you love earnestly, the more a person's injuries against you are covered. It's the nature of good relationships.

By the way ... just pause ... he's not condoning bad behavior, he's not condoning perpetual bad behavior. And love is not trust. Don't equivocate those words, because if you lose trust, you have to earn the trust back, right? That's just how that works. You can love someone and not trust them. I just want to make sure people get those two words ... they're not the same.

So, what he's saying is that there needs to be an atmosphere in the church, an atmosphere of grace. Because if there's not an atmosphere of grace, there's going to be division.

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers all transgressions.

Peter is more than likely quoting an Old Testament proverb out of Proverbs chapter 10. And look how it contrasts ... if you're not going to love, look at what you're going to do. He says here, "Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers all transgressions." Hatred blows things up. If you're not going to be loving earnestly, what happens is you're going to find yourself arguing over pettiness. You're going to be dividing over picky little things. You're going to be looking for small cracks in somebody's comments and exaggerate those and gossip about those things. And then you get to play a part in Satan's role in dividing things that are sacred, like families and churches. He's saying that hatefulness leads to a critical spirit, which leads to dissension, which leads to division.

Love hides them from its own sight and not from God's sight. Hate does the opposite; it pries about in order to discover some sin or some semblance of sin in a brother and then broadcasts it, even exaggerates it, gloats over it.

--- R. C. H. Lenski

Here's a good quote contrasting these. "Love hides sins from its own sight and not from God's sight. Hate does the opposite; it pries about in order to discover some sin or some semblance of sin"—oh, I'll count that—"in a brother and then broadcasts it, even exaggerates it, gloats over it."

I bet most of you have an experience where you've seen a long-term friendship or even a wonderful marriage, and all things are going swimmingly, and then some event takes place, and just like that, love leaves and so does everything else. The moment love is lost, then all of a sudden there's this inventory of crimes that come up. *And these are the ninety-seven reasons that I shouldn't even be friends with or married to you ever again.* How does that happen? Because love has left, and so all of these things are unveiled.

I ran across a great little article from *Reader's Digest*—anyone? *Reader's Digest*. Yeah, it was written on a piece of leather. And it's a wonderful story about how this happened in a marriage. Listen to this:

In the middle of one of my parents' more memorable disagreements, my father jumped up from the table, grabbed two sheets of paper, and said to my mother, "Fine, let's just write down everything we don't like about each other." And so, as this little boy watched, his mother wrote something down. And the father is glaring at her, and so he writes something down.

She's looking at him, she writes something else down. Then he writes something else down.

And this just goes back and forth. And then he stands up and says, "That's enough. Okay. Now let's exchange papers."

And she starts reading and then screams, "I want mine back. Give me mine back!"

Because every time she had written something about him, he wrote, "I love you." She wrote something else and he wrote, "I love you." She said something a third time—"I love you." That argument died that very minute.

And do you know why? Because love covers a multitude of sins. Love has a powerful kindness that changes people's lives. It's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. Love, particularly forgiveness that covers a multitude of sins, gives people hope. When other people see forgiveness given to someone else, they long for that. Because guilt and regret weigh the soul down. And especially if it's something shameful that's been kept quiet, it just keeps a person in the muck and the mud of life. And when they see someone else freed, they want that kind of freedom. Love covers a multitude of sins and gives people's souls wings to fly. That's the whole theme of *Les Misérables*, if you know that story. See the movie or watch the musical. You've replaced sorrow and resentment and pain with joy and freedom. Love is so powerful.

And so, he says, "Love earnestly. Earnestly love one another." And he says this in the context, friends, of persecution. In the context of when the well goes dry and we're all in poverty, then do that especially. Don't turn on each other—turn towards each other.

Peter is saying, *In the world of sharks, there's blood in the water; you be a dolphin*. You swim faster and you have a lot more fun. Dolphins ride waves. Dolphins save people. They don't eat people.

And these four skills have been exhausted in the Church in the last two years. People are writing about it in a lot of different journals—that sound judgment and sober spirit and thoughtful prayers and deep love have pattered out. And now there's division amongst us for,

frankly, petty reasons. The Church bought into the smoke and mirrors of these various things that keep being thrown at us so that other bad people can make money.

And Peter is just saying, *I don't understand*. You can have completely different political views from a brother or sister. You can have completely different political applications than a brother and sister. But you can love them. So, stop calling them names. Stop using words that are inappropriate.

Couples, families, friends, and congregations once united in their commitment to Christ are now dividing over seemingly irreconcilable views of the world. In fact, they are not merely dividing but becoming incomprehensible to one another.

**--Tim Dalrymple
President and CEO of *Christianity Today***

And our culture is just growing increasingly hostile to the Church. Here's a wonderful quote that I read this week—the ink is still wet. This is from the president and CEO of Christianity Today about how pervasive division is within families and within church because of our times. “Couples, families, friends, and congregations once united in their commitment to Christ are now dividing over seemingly irreconcilable views of the world. In fact, they are merely dividing but becoming incomprehensible to one another.”

As persecution increases and as things get worse, the plan is to divide family and church because those are the things that God loves. And the media and the social media and the politics and the government—that's what they do, and they do it well. And how do we prepare for that? Sound judgment. Sober spirit. Excessively loving one another. Thoughtful prayer. That's how we prep. That's the Church's prep.

Are you prepared?

5. Be Available

Fifth attribute: be available. “**Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.**” So, the word “hospitality” in Greek is actually a combination of two words, and it means “love strangers.” So, it's not like loving the people that you like and loving the people that are in the community. But rather, it's loving people that are outsiders that don't agree with you and are out

there. And that's why we do a lot of serving our city things; we want to get out there and show hospitality.

And it's interesting—if you understand hospitality, quite often it is inconvenient, it is costly, it's time-consuming, and it's exhausting. And so, Peter says to show hospitality ... without grumbling. I mean, he's got to add that because he's just looking around, thinking, *That doesn't feel like hospitality when you look like that. Put the lemon down that you're sucking on.*

Hey, here's an easy way to apply hospitality here at Grace. We'd love for you to do this. So many people are coming back to church and some people are coming back to our church—some people are coming to church for the first time. We're seeing it like we haven't see it in decades. Every regular attender is a hospitality greeter, okay? Let's just do that. Raise your hand and pledge—you're deputized. If you know where the bathrooms are, congratulations—you're a regular attender. And so, here's what I would like you to consider: showing hospitality. When you see people with that look in their eye because they don't know which building to go to, just go to them and say, “Hey, are you new? Do you need someone to sit with? You want to go to lunch?” Take them to lunch. Your job is to find then a good Bible-teaching church. And if you can't afford lunch, you bring the receipt back next week and I'll help find a way to get you paid back for that. It's not about that, it's about getting connected to people and getting them connected to Christ through a Bible-teaching church. Show hospitality ... without grumbling. So, some of you are not quite qualified for that yet. You need a little more happiness in your step, and then you can do that. (I'm just kidding, okay?) Without grumbling, show hospitality.

He's going to go on now and explain how hospitality is shown. We'll go rapid fire through this. **“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”**

And so, what he's talking about there is throughout the newer Testament, that each and every Christian is given a special spiritual gift, at least one. And then we're responsible for using that gift—different gifts for different people—and you're supposed to be using that. The idea of spiritual gift is twofold: one, to minister to other people, primarily in the body of Christ; and second, the spiritual part of it is kind of fun. I guess I would say I'm a teacher—my spiritual gift is teaching. I'm putting out this much, but God makes it this much. If somebody has the gift of hospitality or service and are putting this much into it and they're not seeing much return on

investment—who cares, no one notices—but the Spirit makes it so much more. People’s lives are being changed just because you’re being nice and showing hospitality without being grumpy.

And what he’s saying here is, Look, you have these gifts. Show hospitality in those. But the whole time, watch how it’s all pointing to eternity. It’s all pointing to the glory of God the Father. Look what he says in verse 11. He’s using examples here. **“Whoever speaks, as one who speaks the oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

Want to be prepared? This is what it looks like. It’s serving our fellow men, especially those in the Church, like Christ would, through the power of the Spirit that lives in us to the glory of God the Father. All things are to the glory of God the Father. That way when we stand before Him, we’ll say our lives were a living sacrifice. We’re going to try to make everything we do be for the glory of God; that when we show up that day and whether we’re in poverty or in prosperity, we bring to Him this painting that is our life. And it all makes it to heaven. The refining fire doesn’t burn off things that were petty and temporal.

Do You Believe This?

The application, I think, for this section of Scripture, verses 7 through 11, is asking the fundamental question, “Do you believe this?” I mean, do you believe the Gospel like Peter is talking about here? Or do you just mostly believe it?

Because if you just mostly believe it, you’re living with a foot in both worlds. That’s a life of regret. If you believe it like Peter, that the Lord’s coming soon, or your last heartbeat is seven beats from now—either way—you live with eternity with the decisions you make in this very temporal time. And Peter is saying, *Come on, man. Make the most of it.*

You know, I started off by telling you a story about what crazy looks like. It’s me going to the Formula One with “The End Is Near” signs. And besides that people have been saying that for two thousand years and it hasn’t happened, we also have an attitude sometimes that people that are so heavenly minded are no earthly good. They’re always talking about heaven, and what are they doing here?

And that’s actually just a lie. If you look at the history of Christianity from the early days until modern times, au contraire. The people that are most heavenly minded, that is their focal

point in life They start looking at this life like it's just a pretty bad night in a sleazy hotel. And they live accordingly.

If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world are just the ones that thought the most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you'll get the Earth "thrown in": aim at Earth and you'll get neither.

**--C. S. Lewis
*Mere Christianity***

C. S. Lewis makes a masterful work of this in this quote: "If you read history you will find the Christians who did the most for the present world are just the ones that thought the most of the next life. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on this Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. Today you see Christians largely ceasing to think about that other world, and so they have no effect on this world. Aim at Heaven and you'll get the Earth 'thrown in': aim at Earth and you lose it all."

Let's be a church, individually, collectively, with people that are so heavenly minded, we are earth changers.

Are you prepared? Let's be prepared.

[Prayer]

Lord Jesus, we are grateful for this lesson from Peter, that he would write us and tell us how to live life different than his; a life that glorifies You in all that we do, a sharp mind, that we

pray intelligent prayers, that we sacrificially love one another, that we pay the high price for hospitality, and that we realize what our spiritual gifts are, that we might bring those to this body so that in everything we do it would glorify You.

Let us be a church that longingly, expectantly waits for Your return, and between now and then, we don't get distracted. We see that division is the end game and we play no part in that. We surrender our egos to Your will. And Lord, let us glorify You, not just in what we do, but even the things we think.

Lord, would You give us a vision for ministry that's all around us, that we might help bring someone to a knowledge of who you are, or help some believer grow deep in their faith, away from fear? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.