

GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 6

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 19TH

EXPRESSING HOPE

THE SPIRIT OF
THE CHURCH

GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2017 – EXPRESSING HOPE WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 19, 2017 - 1 PETER 4:7-11

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) When have you experienced great service? Retail, restaurant, etc. What made it a great experience?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

As you read the authors of the New Testament, you discover that they felt as though Jesus would return and restore all things during their lifetime. Peter is no different and speaks of the end being near as a way of encouraging followers of Jesus to live appropriately and to serve God. Since the end times are near, one might expect Peter to call for some sort of extraordinary service or behavior, but instead he simply says pursue the virtues that are expected of followers of Jesus.

Since our time on earth is short, Peter says we ought to take seriously the calling to love others. 1 John 4:19 says we love because God first loved us. Peter says because God has loved us, we need to make sure we are living for others and loving them unconditionally. He is not saying that our love of others somehow redeems us, but that as we love and serve others we see them from a different perspective which helps to “cover up” their sinfulness and shortcomings.

As we discussed, a couple of Sundays ago, the topic of hospitality is one that is very important in the early church. In this case, it is probably related to believers opening their homes to itinerant missionaries and others who were preaching the gospel and sharing the good news of Jesus. Believers were not to grow weary of extending hospitality. Instead they were to see it as a part of their service to God.

Peter reminds his readers that each one of them has received a gift, but that their gifts are different. God's grace manifests itself in numerous ways. What matters is “why” we are given gifts, not so much the gift. We are not given spiritual gifts so that we can brag about our gift, but instead gifts are given to serve others. Peter does not offer a list of gifts but Paul does, though we should not see these lists as exhaustive. See Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Ephesians 4:11-13. We are to use our gifts to strengthen others and to steward these gifts well.



Peter looks at spiritual gifts from a functional standpoint and says they basically fall into the category of speaking gifts and serving gifts. For those who speak, they would speak the “very words of God.” For those who serve others, they are to “rely on God’s strength.” In all of this, God is to receive the glory. We are not given spiritual gifts so that people might think how great we are, but we are given gifts so that people might see the great God that we serve.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

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. ⁹Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. ¹¹If 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.

- 2) Verse 7 states that the “end of all things is near....” How do you reconcile that statement with the fact that this was written almost 2000 years ago? How do you stay motivated when a deadline is unknown or unclear?
- 3) What does v. 8 mean to you: “Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins”?
- 4) We often grow weary when we have been serving for a long time. Can you think of a time this has happened, and what did you do. If you endured and persevered, what helped you continue to serve?
- 5) When you serve others, do you find yourself serving out of your own strengths or out of God’s strength? Do you think there is a difference?
- 6) How do the gifts God has given you determine the ways in which you serve? How do these gifts help determine your purpose?
- 7) What does “in all things God may be praised” (v.11) mean? Why is it important to glorify God with your life today?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) This passage starts with a call to prayer. Pray together that God would reveal opportunities for you to love and serve others.