



GROWTH GROUP FALL 2019

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND: FINDING HOPE IN 1ST PETER

WEEK 6 – OCTOBER 20, 2019 - 1 PETER 3:8-12

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Peter says there are five characteristics that ought to define all followers of Jesus. We should 1) be of the same mind, 2) sympathize with each other, 3) love each other as brothers and sisters, 4) be tenderhearted, and 5) keep a humble attitude.

Another way of saying that we should be of the same mind is to say that we are to live in harmony with one another. Paul had told the Philippians something very similar. They were to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. See Philippians 2:1-2, 5. We are to sympathize with one another. Hebrews 4:15 says that Christ is our high priest who sympathizes with us in our weaknesses. In Galatians 6:2, the apostle Paul said we are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Because we are all now children of the living God, we need to love one another. We should also be compassionate or tenderhearted. The word here for tenderhearted literally refers to our inner organs. The Greeks usually associated "guts/organs" with courage, but in the Bible they refer to mercy and concern. Jesus had compassion for the sick, as well as the crowds. Compassion can never be demanded, it is simply given. Finally, we are to be humble. Peter had watched Jesus take up a towel and wash the feet of his disciples, and so had seen firsthand what true humility looked like.

We are not to retaliate with insults. Instead, we are to bless. We don't have to ask for God's favor on those who profane his name, but we do need to pray for them. Stephen prayed for the people who stoned him to death and asked for God to not to hold their sin against them. Remarkably, Saul who became the apostle Paul, was amongst that crowd. You never know what your prayers might do.

Peter uses Psalm 34 again (see also 1 Peter 2:3-4) to bring his point home in verses 10-12. There is a sense that we are to seek ways to bless people throughout life so that we may inherit a blessing. God's eyes are on the ones who practice compassion and pursue peace. God hears their prayers and blesses their lives.



EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read 1 Peter 3:8-12

8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. 9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. 10 For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. 11 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. 12 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil."

- 1) What is the difference between empathy and sympathy?
- 2) Peter says there are five things that should mark our lives as followers of Jesus. See verse 8. Which of these five is the easiest for you and which is the most difficult?
- 3) Peter's Jewish audience and our own culture are very judgmental. Jesus turned that thinking upside down. Verse 9 speaks against getting even when someone wrongs you. Instead, Jesus said to repay evil with a blessing. Can you think of a time when you repaid someone's bad behavior with an act of kindness/forgiveness?
- 4) In verse 10 we are told to guard our tongues from telling lies or "speaking evil". In our day, perhaps we could substitute the word gossip for telling lies or speaking evil. Gossip is detrimental in many ways. How can our snarky, mean spirited words perpetuate bad examples to those closest to us? (our kids, grandkids, friends, co-workers, etc...).
- 5) Does social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) make it easier to speak poorly of others? Why?
- 6) What are some practical ways we can we show compassion and humility in a world that often seems agitated and impatient? List examples.
- 7) Verse 11 asks us to search for peace and work at maintaining peace. That implies it is not easy. Discuss some roadblocks to maintaining peace with others, especially when negativity invades the situation.

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) We are told in verse 12 that the Lord hears our prayers when we are living faithfully and turning away from evil. What can you do this week to help remind you of that reality?