

1 Peter 4:1-11 | LIVING FOR WHAT MATTERS

Big Idea | Living hope reorders our priorities.

There's a difference between adding something to your life and letting it rearrange it.

I used to be able to hop on my bike on a Monday morning and just... go. Forty miles, no plan, gone for hours. Nobody to answer to. Nobody waiting. Just me, the road, and whatever pace I felt like.

Then... I had kids.

Now when I bring one of them along in the trailer, it adds about forty pounds to my bike. Forty pounds I didn't used to carry. And that forty pounds does three things: it slows me down. It changes my whole center of gravity. And — this is the part I didn't expect — it makes me ride safer. I take corners differently. I watch the road differently. I'm not just riding for me anymore.

That's not addition. That's rearrangement. Same bike. Same rider. Completely different ride. That's exactly Peter's point in today's passage.

PSYCHOLOGY | Interestingly, psychologists who study religion have tried to measure this very thing. They discovered that mature faith isn't best measured by how often someone attends church, but by whether faith actually rearranges everything else. Researchers began asking questions like:

- Does your faith affect your everyday decisions?
- Does it influence how you spend your time?
- Does it shape your relationships?
- Do you seek God's will before major decisions?
- Does your faith carry over into every area of life?

Notice what they're measuring. They're not asking, 'Do you believe in God?' They're asking, 'Has God reordered your life?' Let's read our text for today, 1 Peter 4:1-11:

1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ²As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they

might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 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. 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.

Living Hope doesn't merely add Jesus to our priorities. **Big Idea** | Living Hope reorders our priorities.

As we dive into this passage, I want to warn us about a ditch we could fall into. The ditch is to hear Peter saying, 'The end is near! Hurry! Do more! Try harder! Panic!' That's how many people hear passages like this. We picture people selling everything, hiding in bunkers in South Dakota, obsessing over prophecy charts, trying to identify the Antichrist, and living in fear.

But that's not what Peter does. Notice what Peter says instead: 'The end of all things is near. Therefore...' What comes next? Pray. Love. Open your home. Serve. Use your gifts. Speak God's word. Why? So that God may be glorified.

1 | ORIENT YOUR LIFE AWAY FROM YOUR OLD WAY OF LIVING (vv.1-6)

Peter isn't simply saying, "Stop sinning." His argument is much richer than that. He says, because Christ suffered, because He died and rose again, we are to **arm ourselves with His same mindset**. That means we are to be willing to suffer for doing the will of God rather than giving in to the desires of our flesh. Verse 2 says it this way: *"As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."*

Notice Peter doesn't divide the world into people who have desires and people who don't. Every one of us has desires and wrestles with temptation. The question isn't whether you have desires; the question is, what is directing your life? Are you oriented toward satisfying your own desires, or are you increasingly oriented toward doing the will of God?

Some of you hear the word "desire" and immediately think, "Well, I still struggle." Let me encourage you. **Just because you feel a sinful desire doesn't mean you've sinned.** Jesus Himself was tempted in every way, yet without sin. Temptation is not the issue. The issue is what we do with those desires. Do we surrender to them, or do we surrender them to Christ?

Peter reminds these believers what characterized their former way of living. He mentions debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and idolatry. He's not trying to create an exhaustive list of every possible sin. *Maybe you have someone in mind right now that could somehow ace this list!* He's painting a picture of a life that revolves around self—living for pleasure, excess, and false worship instead of living for God.

- **Debauchery** is shameless, unrestrained living with no moral boundaries. We have sayings in our culture like, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas."
- **Lust** is allowing sinful desires to become the driving force of your life rather than submitting those desires to Christ.
- **Drunkenness** is habitual intoxication that clouds your judgment.
- **Carousing** refers to drinking parties and reckless celebrations centered around excess.
- **Idolatry** isn't just bowing before statues. It's giving ultimate devotion to anything that sits on the throne of your heart instead of Jesus.

And here's what I love about our church. Some of you came to Christ and the Lord radically changed your desires almost overnight. Boom, cold Turkey! You were delivered from addictions. You walked away from things that once controlled your life. Praise God for His transforming power!

Others of you have a different story. You love Jesus, but you still fight some of the same temptations you fought years ago. And then there are others whose greatest temptation isn't necessarily the sin itself; *it's the people you used to commit those sins with.* Every time you're around that group of friends, it's like the old life comes knocking again. Peter understands that reality.

That's why I love what he says in verse 3: "For you have spent enough time in the past..." Those words are full of grace. Peter doesn't say, "You've ruined your life." He doesn't say, "You've wasted everything." He simply says, **Enough**. You've given enough years to that way of living. **Enough** years trying to satisfy yourself through things that could never satisfy you. **Enough** years believing that another drink, another hook-up, another purchase, another party would finally give you the life you're looking for. Peter says, "**Enough**. Now live the rest of your earthly life for the will of God."

And pay attention to the repeated contrasts Peter keeps making? Your old desires versus God's will. Your old identity versus the Living Hope you've received in Christ. Peter's issue isn't merely behavioral; it's directional. He's asking, Where is your life headed? Is your life still oriented toward your former way of living, or has Living Hope begun to reorient your entire life?

The wonderful news of the gospel is that Jesus didn't simply die to forgive your past. He rose again to free you from being enslaved to it. Christianity isn't behavior modification. It's new life. Leaning on His strength, we say "no" to the old way and "yes" to the new.

Then Peter says something that really struck me this week. He says, **"They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living."** Church, I think that's one of the most convicting verses in this entire passage. *The people who knew the old you should be surprised by the new you.* Not because you're trying to be weird. Not because you're trying to come across as more spiritual than everyone else. But because Jesus has genuinely changed you.

Have you ever found yourself being the person that goes against the current of what your friends, family, and coworkers want to do? Say no enough times and you stop getting invited.

The guy who always had another round suddenly says, "No thanks." The coworker who used to laugh at every crude joke doesn't anymore. The couple who used to ignore God's design for sexuality now wants to honor Christ. The person who always lived for themselves suddenly starts serving other people. Peter says people notice that kind of change. *In fact, they are surprised by it.*

Let me ask. Who is surprised by your life? If Living Hope has truly reordered our priorities, someone ought to notice. Not because we're obnoxious Christians, but because we're becoming different people.

But Peter also prepares us for what often happens next. That surprise doesn't always turn into *admiration*. Sometimes it turns into *hostility*. Sometimes your changed life becomes a mirror that others don't want to look into. You didn't condemn them. You didn't preach at them. You simply changed. And because your life now points in a different direction, some people feel uncomfortable. Peter says they may insult you. They may misjudge your motives. They may accuse you of thinking you're better than everyone else. They may even plot to harm your reputation, livelihood, or body—rest assured, God will judge them.

And don't be surprised when that happens. Jesus experienced it. Christians have experienced it for two thousand years. The same Living Hope that frees us from our old life also gives us strength to count the cost.

2 | ORIENT YOUR LIFE TOWARD GOD'S FAMILY (vv.7-11)

Peter has shown us that Living Hope changes how we view our past. Now he turns our attention to the future—not so we'll obsess over what's coming, but so we'll know how to live today.

Peter writes,

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray." (1 Peter 4:7)

Now, if you stopped reading right there, what would you expect Peter to say next?

"The end is near! Make some signs and warn everybody on the street corner!"

"The end is near! The Antichrist is here!"

"The end is near! Hunker in a bunker!"

If people saw me standing on the corner of South and Downey holding those signs, they'd probably say, "Yep... that's what Christians do when they think the end is near."

And let's be honest, while most of us probably wouldn't make signs like these, sometimes we start thinking like this. We become fascinated with prophecy charts, trying to figure out timelines or treating every world event like it's the final clue.

But that's not what Peter teaches us to do in light of Christ's return. Peter's application is actually surprising. When Peter thinks about the return of Christ, he doesn't become fascinated with prophecy.

He becomes fascinated with people. Not **events**...relationships. Not **conspiracies**...community. Not **fear**...hope.

Peter is preparing Christians to love well until the end. Look at where his mind goes next: pray, love, welcome, serve.

But before application, Peter gives us the right mindset first — because when it comes to the end times, Christians can lose their minds.

Instead, Peter says, **"Be alert and sober-minded."** Church, we live in a world of mental intoxication. Not necessarily with alcohol. With nonstop news. Social media outrage. Conspiracy theories. Endless entertainment.

Never before have we had so much information, yet so little attention. Peter isn't calling us to be more informed. He's calling us to be more clear-headed. Because distracted Christians rarely pray. Distracted Christians rarely love deeply. Distracted Christians rarely serve faithfully.

Peter is saying, *"Get your mind back. Don't let the noise of the world drown out the voice of God."*

An alert and sober mind doesn't pull us away from God's family. It draws us deeper into it. And look where Peter goes next. He writes one of the most relational paragraphs in the entire letter. He doesn't say, "Stockpile supplies." He says, **"Love one another deeply."** He doesn't say, "Withdraw from the world." He says, **"Open your home."** Peter is teaching us that the closer we get to the end, the closer we get to each other.

Why? **Because sober-minded Christians invest deeply in God's family.**

How do we invest deeply in God's family? Pray. Love. Welcome. Serve.

PRAY. Prayer isn't our last resort. It's our first response. At Light & Life we believe Jesus was serious about prayer. We pray believing God still heals. Still opens doors. Still performs miracles. But prayer also does something else. It aligns our hearts with God's will.

If you want to grow in prayer, join us Wednesdays at 6 PM, Fridays at noon on Zoom, Sundays at 8 AM before service, or sign up for our weekly prayer email.

Sober-minded believers pray.

▲ **LOVE.** Peter says, **"Above all."** Not "above all, be right." Not "above all, win the argument." Not "above all, get what you deserve."

|| **Above all — love each other deeply.** And not the easy kind. You know what kind I mean. The kind that's easy when nobody's hurt you. Easy when nobody's disappointed you. Easy when your marriage is good and your friend didn't betray you and your kid actually listened this week.

That's not the love Peter's talking about.

▲ **He's talking to you** — the one still stinging from something said about you, right here, in this church. The one who hasn't forgiven someone who let you down and never made it right. The one who trusted somebody with something private and watched it get passed around anyway. The one who reaches out to a brother or sister who used to be close, and keeps getting nothing back.

◆ Peter looks at all of that and says: **love anyway.** Not because it doesn't hurt. Not because they deserve it. Because Christ loved you when you didn't deserve it either.

ABOVE ALL — love deeply. Not shallow. Not convenient. Not love with an exit clause. The kind of love that's stretched — pulled to its absolute limit — and *still doesn't let go.*

That's the love that covers.

Not excuses sin. Not pretends it didn't happen. Covers it. Refuses to let it win. Refuses to let it be the last word between you and the person who hurt you.

|| Friends are messy. Churches are messy. *You're messy.*

Peter says — love them anyway.

WELCOME. Peter continues, "Offer hospitality to one another without *grumbling.*" Hospitality isn't merely inviting people over. It's making room. In Peter's day, hospitality often meant caring for traveling Christians, displaced believers, widows, and strangers.

Hospitality always costs somebody something. For the last six weeks I've had about ten guys over Thursday nights for Summer Book Club. In the first week, I happily offered everyone some of my ice-cold Kirkland sparkling water.

The next week...More sparkling water. The week after that... More sparkling water. Pretty soon my Costco-sized supply was gone. It only comes with 32. I actually caught myself thinking, *"Maybe I should hide these Sparkling Waters..." I began to grumble.*

My mindset became, "If I'm giving...I should get something back." But Peter says, "Offer hospitality **without grumbling.**" That's the difference. Biblical hospitality isn't

transactional. It doesn't count sparkling waters. It's making room for people because Christ made room for us.

Sober-minded Christians open their homes...and they open them joyfully.

SERVE. Finally, Peter says, "Use whatever gift you have received to serve others." Peter assumes every believer has received a gift of God's grace. Some of you are newer Christians. You need to hear this. God has gifted you. The New Testament lists more than thirty spiritual gifts. Not everyone has the same gift.

And that's okay. Peter says, "**Whatever gift...**" The emphasis isn't on comparing gifts. It's on using your gift. I love this truth: **A gift doesn't make you better than others. It makes others better when you use it.**

Your gift isn't about your platform. It's about someone else's blessing. Use it humbly, depending on God's strength and not your own.

And then Peter does something beautiful. For five verses he's been talking about our prayers, our gifts, our serving. But suddenly his eyes lift — he can no longer talk about us without talking about Him. Everything we've talked about isn't ultimately about us. Peter lifts our eyes from God's family to God's glory.

And that's exactly where he wants to leave us.

3 | ORIENT YOUR LIFE FOR GOD'S GLORY (v.11)

We've talked about leaving our old way of life.

We've talked about loving God's family. But Peter isn't finished. Because Peter knows there's one more question every Christian must answer.

Why pray? Why forgive? Why open your home? Why live differently at all?

Peter gives one breathtaking answer... **"So that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."**

...so...that..." That means everything before this was leading here. Then... **"in all things..."** Not just Sunday mornings. Not just ministry. Not just when you're leading worship. All things. Your marriage. Your parenting. Your suffering. Your work. Your generosity. Your friendships. Peter refuses to divide life into sacred and secular.

Every part of life becomes an opportunity to bring God glory.

That's the whole aim. Not just what we believe — what our lives point to.

RESPONSE

We started today talking about researchers — people who spent years trying to answer one question: *how do you know when faith is mature?*

They asked good questions. Does your faith shape your decisions? Your priorities? Your relationships?

But Peter's been asking something deeper this whole time, and I think it's the real question underneath theirs: *Has Living Hope reordered your life?*

Maybe for some of you, that means going away from something — an old pattern, an old crowd, a weight you've been carrying that isn't armor, it's just dead weight. Something you've given enough years to.

[...]

Maybe it means going toward something — toward God's family. Actually loving people who've disappointed you. Actually opening your home, even when it costs you something. Actually using the gift He gave you instead of sitting on it.

[...]

Or maybe it means living for something bigger than yourself — not your platform, not your comfort, but His glory. In all things. Not just Sunday mornings.

[...]

Whatever you just named in that silence — Peter already told you where it leads. Not to shame. Not to a longer to-do list. It leads to Jesus.

BLESSING

So let's end where Peter ends. Would you stand with me, and let's read this together — out loud, as one church:

Peter's Doxology

"To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."