



## 1 Peter 4:7-11

### Pray Seriously, Love Fervently

Summary: In times of difficulty and crisis we are tempted to get our eyes fixed on our selves, Peter encourages us to get them up and out instead.

As we open up the Scriptures this morning, I want to remind us where we are and what's going on. We're reading a letter by the apostle Peter to people who had been through difficult times. He said, back in Chapter One, they had been [grieved by various trials](#).

I don't want you to miss that. I want you to see and know and understand – Christians throughout history have gone through difficult seasons. They have been [grieved by various trials](#). And so have you. And it doesn't mean you've done anything wrong. Sometimes bad things just happen, even to good people. You can't stop that from that, but you can work on your response.

That's what Peter is trying to do with these early Christians. He tells them, I know you've been through some rough stuff. I know life has been hard. Maybe it's still hard right now, and maybe you still don't see the way out. But right there, in the pain, in the confusion, in the doubt, the worry and the struggle, I want you to remember:

[1 Peter 1:3 God has begotten \[you\] again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith](#)

In other words, right there, in the trial, in the hardship, in the crisis, God is with you, watching over you, and nothing, absolutely nothing, can shake you out of His hands. And when your life on earth is over, eternity is waiting for you. So Christian, you, of all people, are in a better position to endure trials than anyone else on earth. You were made for this. This is your moment. You have the Spirit of God in you and the family of God around you. Life may be hard, but God offers you strength, comfort, and encouragement directly and through the body of Christ.

So then Peter talks about some of the specific difficulties you may face and how to respond. He says you might have problems with your government, but God wants you to submit. And to do it in such a way that your political opponents glorify God. He says you might have a miserable boss, a real self-absorbed jerk, but God wants you to be patient with them and serve them so well that it makes them think about this God you worship. He says you might have a marriage that's gone sour, a spouse that's not who or what they used to be and God says I want you to love them, serve them, and win them to Christ by your character and conduct.

It's an impossible task, unless Christ is in us. You can't fake this. I can't fake it. Crisis, stress, conflict, they expose what was always in us. When you wring out a sponge you quickly know whether it was clean or not. Applying pressure makes it obvious.

So now as we come to the end of the letter, Peter gives additional instructions for enduring hard times, how to make sure the right things come out of us. And he says:

**1 Peter 4:7** But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. **8** And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *"love will cover a multitude of sins."* **9** Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. **10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11** If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

So let's pull all that apart and see what God has for us because this is all stuff you can, and should, be able to bring into your life today – you should be able to walk out of here different than you walked in, if you let God speak to you this morning.

The first thing we're told is to pray. Now, for many people, that's kind of a natural reaction when things go bad. But the problem is, they don't pray that often at other times, and so they're not quite sure what to say or how to do it or if they're doing it right.

We were with family last week at a beach house in Florida, seven family units all under one roof, all at different places spiritually. But on the first night when it's time for dinner, they want to pray, and who do they ask to do it? Me. And I jokingly said, sure, I'm happy to; I've got the Unlimited plan.

Now why did that happen? Why did 23 people turn and ask me to pray? Because I'm a pastor, yes, but also because most people are uncomfortable praying, and they're certainly uncomfortable praying out loud, in front of other people, so let's just ask "the professional."

I'm here to tell you, you can and you should grow out of that fear. I can talk to my wife or my kids in front of anyone, why can't I talk to my Heavenly Father? Because we make prayer something magical or mystical, something it's not supposed to be. I can talk to my wife in front of you because I know her, we have relationship. It doesn't feel awkward, I talk to her all the time – about big things, little things, private and personal things, and things that are nothing at all. Your relationship with God should be the same way – you should feel comfortable talking with Him – especially if you really believe what you say you believe.

If you believe He does miracles. If you believe He sees and knows what is happening in life. If you believe He really wants to direct, comfort, and strengthen you. If you believe He really wants to talk with you. Look, Christian, I know you could pass a test on doctrine and belief, but do you live it out? Do you put in practice?

Could you ever describe your prayer life as serious and watchful? Maybe not. But that makes you just like the Christians Peter is writing to. They needed to be encouraged, so do you. We're all growing, right? So let's talk about what it looks like.

Some of the other English Bible translations bring out the idea of being wide-awake in prayer, of being sober in the face of trials – taking things seriously and taking them to God in prayer. Or, being calm and collected – cool under fire so to speak – in part because you see what is happening, you experience and feel the difficulties and the disappointments, maybe you're the one suffering from what's unfolding, but you're clear-minded and self-controlled BECAUSE you're taking things to God in prayer. You're saying I can't carry this on my own, it's too heavy, I need you God. You don't just ask Him for things like you're shopping at Amazon – hey God, I need this, could you drop it off on my porch, you're inviting Him in to the challenges and opportunities of your life.

Or, you're interceding for others. Praying for others.

In the Air Force we have TACP's they're the ones down on the ground that get on the radio and talk to the pilots and say drop the bomb right over there, or drop that pallet of supplies right over here and then come back again. They are an incredibly valuable asset to have on the battlefield – a critical link to the air power in the sky.



Think of intercessory prayer as the spiritual equivalent of that. Think of the spiritual equivalent of calling in strikes on enemy targets. Or resupplying friendly forces. Are you active in the fight against the enemy of our souls? Are you active in the spiritual lives of the people you know and love? Do you pray for them? Do you ask God to show up and do miraculous things in their lives? Do you ask Him to keep them from harm – spiritual, physical, emotional, or otherwise? Do you ask God to make Himself real to them? Do you pray against the forces of evil in this world?

You could. You should. God wants you to. And you see it right here in Scripture:

**1 Peter 4:7 be serious and watchful in your prayers.**

So, I'm giving you homework. I want you to make a prayer list, something to help you be serious and watchful.

The best way I've found to do this is to take notecards, 3X5, and a little binder clip. I put one thing on each card, sometimes it's a request. Sometimes it's a Scripture promise that I need to remember. I have one for each person in my family, one for each role I fill, one for my extended family, one for the elders, one for the big issues facing our nation, you can have as many as you like and you can shuffle them around - you don't have to pray through them all every day, but when there is something you want to be serious and watchful about, you make a card for it.

There are other ways to do this too – I also have a list of all the church members that I keep in my Bible, each morning as part of my devotions, I work my way through that list. It helps me stay serious and watchful in my prayers.

But once you have your prayer list, the things and people you want to pray for and about, you need to know what to pray. Now, for some people and some things you'll already know, you'll already have your own ideas. And that's fine. But let me also encourage you, to pray Scripture.

Look with me at this passage and I'll show you what I mean. We read,

**1 Peter 4:7** But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

So let's pray – Father, God Your Word says to be **serious and watchful in prayer**, and I need to confess that I don't always do that. I don't pray as often as I could, I don't come to You as often as I should. So God I just want to take a minute and say I haven't been as serious and watchful as I want to be, as I know You want me to be, but would You help me? Would You nudge me? Would you remind me, even pester me? *Please God*, I don't trust myself to do this on my own. Teach me to pray like Jesus taught the disciples. Show me what to pray for, who to pray for. And Father, I want to pray for so and so, and ask that You would nudge them to prayer too, that they would be **serious and watchful in their prayers** and if there is anything I can do to encourage them, would you show me? Amen.

And then, I read the next verse,

**8** And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *"love will cover a multitude of sins."*

And so I pray, God please stir up my church and my small group and my family, teach us to have **fervent love for one another**. Father, as people adjust to being back in a crowded sanctuary and they all have different feelings about that, help us to **love one another, fervently**. Stretch us, fill us with Your love for each other, and teach us what it means not just to love, but to love **fervently**.

And Father, I need to confess my sin to you. So and so did such and such and I haven't forgiven them. I'm holding it over them, instead of covering them with love. And God, I don't really want to change, I'm still upset over what happened. But Your word says, *right here*, what I'm supposed to do. I can't do this without Your help. So, will You help me change? Will You help me do what You say I'm supposed to do?

And look – BOOM! You're praying. You're dropping spiritual bombs on target. You're shattering the enemy's defenses, cutting off his supply lines, medevac'ing the spiritually wounded, and resupplying friendly forces. You're praying, seriously, soberly, watchfully, and you're praying for things *you know* God wants to happen.

Do you think that matters? Do you think it makes a difference? Do you think a TACP makes a difference on the battlefield? Christian this could be you! It should be you, it's what God wants you to be, He's inviting you in, giving you a place and purpose, inviting you to have a tremendous impact for the kingdom.

But there is more than just prayer, we want action too, in fact, we want both, and in that order – prayer, then action.

So [be serious and watchful in your prayers](#), but then verse 8:

*8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

Now, that's the general theme – that's the big picture. But can I can ask you to take a step back and take in the big picture? Who is Peter writing to? Christians. He's writing to the church. Specifically to churches that have been through difficult times lately – [grieved by various trials](#) is what he said, right?

And now, he's telling those people, those Christians, [have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."](#)

So think with me, because there is a test. Who is sinning here? Christians, right? He's telling *them*, [have fervent love for one another](#). He's not writing to people outside the church, he's writing to people inside the church – they're the ones, you and I are the ones who need to be reminded to [love each other fervently](#), even when there has been some sin involved.

But can I just go ahead and say it? You don't want to read that in your Bible. Because you don't want to know that people will sin against you *at church*. But they are. And so are a whole lot of other people. And we're called to forgive, to suffer long, to be patient, and to be loving and kind. Not to return insults for insults, not to shut down emotionally, but to continue reaching out in kindness and initiating reconciliation. Turning the other cheek Jesus called it, and forgiving seventy times seven.

So, how are you doing? Holding any grudges? Nursing any disappointments? Harboring any bitterness toward people at church? And look, you might be justified – maybe you really were wronged, really were snubbed, really were hurt or overlooked. That kind of stuff happens. Which is why you're told to [have fervent love for one another](#) and [let love cover a](#) – look at this word, it's in your Bible too, not just mine – [a multitude of sins](#).

You'd probably erase that if you could. I know it's tempting. It's tempting to all of us – but if you read it, here's what it says, [have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."](#)

You might need to pray about that. For yourself, and for the person or group that hurt you.

Now, that doesn't mean people get a free pass to do and say whatever they want – no, sometimes the most loving thing you can do is to confront someone and point out their sin so it doesn't happen again. But you do it out of love *for them*, out of concern *for them*, you do it to help *them* grow or keep them from hurting others. You don't do it out of anger and frustration.

Church, my concern is, there are a lot of people walking around with church-hurt today, church scars, and they haven't addressed it, they've just moved on to another church or another relationship. They didn't stay and do the hard, but Biblical, thing – [have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”](#)

And of course, you can sit and think about this for a long time when it comes to your immediate relationships as well. Who do you need to reheat your love for? Who have you let slip? Who have you downgraded or moved to the back burner? [Have fervent love](#) for them.

It's the love Jesus has for you. It's the love you get. It's what you receive from Him. Can you ask Him to help you show it to others? God forgives a [multitude](#) of sins, right? Which of your sins did He refuse to forgive?

My brothers and sisters, we are only asked to treat others the way God has treated us. But that means we have to realize and accept that people are going to sin against us – after all, we still sin against God – but just as He is patient with us and fervent in His love for us, we need to be the same way to one another. So ask God for help and then do what God says.

And here's some more practical applications of it all:

### [9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.](#)

I can't stop pointing this out because it keeps coming up – Peter not only tells us what to do, he tells us how to do it. You don't just submit to your spouse, you submit to them *even if they aren't saved* and you do it in such a way that points them to Christ. You don't just show hospitality, you do it [without grumbling](#). And notice, you do it [to one another](#). He's talking about having people you know into your home.

Christians we have got to do this, Scripture says so. We have to be in one another's homes, and do it cheerfully, without complaining or grumbling about the inconvenience or the cost, or the timing or our personality type – I'm just an introvert, that's not really my thing.

So let me throw out a few things that are helpful in this area. One is you have to understand the difference between hospitality and entertaining – entertaining is putting on a show for people, making your best recipe, wearing your nice outfit, making sure the place is spotless and shows off the new super trendy paint color you used on that accent wall. It's doing your best impression of Joanna Gaines or Martha Stewart or The Pioneer Woman or whoever is your influencer of choice.

Now, there's nothing wrong with having a nice party, there's nothing wrong with doing some entertaining. But that's not what we're talking about here – we're talking about **hospitality** – inviting people into your real life, making them feel at home. Serving them whatever you would serve your own family on a normal night, wearing what you normally wear, moving the homework off the table in order to make room to sit.

Don't make it too hard or you'll never get around to it. It's about the people, it's about relationship, it's about doing life together, if you just want people to have a really nice meal – buy them a gift card, save yourself the time and energy and the dirty dishes.

Something else – sometimes being hospitable means sharing the load. If they have young kids, it might be better to ask if you can come to their place and bring food with you. It's typically easier for the young kids to be in their own environment. So, maybe instead of hosting that family, you bring them something and you get together at their place. Madeleine and I have cooked in other people's kitchens, and had other people cook in ours. And we've shown up with take out and had take out brought to us. It's not entertaining, it's **hospitality** and it's ultimately about relationships.

Some of you haven't had anyone over since COVID began. That can't continue. You have to **be hospitable**. Now, I'm not telling you who or when, but it's my job to remind us all of what God's Word says, **9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling**. You might need to pray sincerely and watchfully about what that's going to look like and who you should have over next because Christians belong together. We're meant to do one another good, because God has done good to us.

Read with me:

**10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**

One of the things we say around here all the time is we receive and then reflect. God has given you gifts and He asks you to share them.

Just read your Bible with me - **10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another**. So, are you a Christian? Are you a child of God? If so, you have received gifts from God. Do you know what they are? You're supposed to be ministering **to one another** – what does that look like in your life?

My brother is staying with us for a few weeks, and he was out mowing my lawn recently, being a tremendous blessing. But I noticed he wasn't using the power assist on the mower as he was pushing it up our hill so I pointed it out to him. Pushing a mower uphill on your own feels different than using the power assist – well, you have a power assist in your life – God wants to pour out power through you into the lives of people around you – He wants to give you gifts SO THAT you can minister to one another. Is that happening in your life? You might need to pray about it, seriously, and watchfully – ask God to help you see when, where, and how, He wants you to serve, to minister to others.

But remember, it's not just what you do, it's how you do it – we live, and serve, in such a way that it points others to Christ.

*11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Notice, God gives you the opportunity, the strength, and the gifts to serve, He wants to use you to make a difference in the lives of other people – to do them good, for His glory.

Whatever your gift is, whatever role you have been given to play in the body of Christ, we're all serving for the same ultimate reason – that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has saved you, brought you into the family of God, and given you gifts through the Holy Spirit. Now He wants to use you to continue to build His Kingdom, expand it's borders, and punch holes in the darkness. He wants to use you to call in spiritual air strikes on enemy strongholds, to request resupplies for the spiritually weary and empty, to request an occasional show of force for friendly forces.

Glory and dominion belong to Him forever and ever, and He looks over at you and says, "Hey, come join Me. Come get in the game." "Go over there and love those people, even when they sin against you, love them fervently, cover over their sins." "Take those people into your home, encourage them, refresh them, be good to them, do something nice for them and don't see it as a burden, don't grumble about it, just go share with them some of what I've already given you."

"Take this gift and minister it to that person. And as you do, it's going to point them to Me. Because here's what you don't know – while I've been talking with you, I've also been talking with them. While you're praying for them, the Holy Spirit is bringing conviction on them. While you keep loving them, I'm breaking down their all their belief that they're no good and no one likes them. You're inviting them over and they've been praying they would be able to meet some people."

God is giving you gifts that perfectly match the needs of the people around you because He wants them to see Him, through you.

Christian, this is the opportunity you've been given. To pray seriously and watchfully, to love fervently, and to serve graciously – to reflect to others what you've already received. And it's all meant to happen right here, right now, among these people.

So let's pray.

I love you church, God loves you; now go love Him, & love others in His name – and tell your mom you love her.





## Application and Discussion Questions

### 1 Peter 4:7-11

#### Pray Seriously, Love Fervently

Summary: In times of difficulty and crisis we are tempted to get our eyes fixed on our selves, Peter encourages us to get them up and out instead.

- How do you respond to the fact that God doesn't just tell us *what* to do (love others/be hospitable) He also tells us *how* to do it (love fervently/be hospitable without grumbling)?
  - Why do you think God speaks to us about the spirit of our actions as well the actions themselves?
- Have you ever been hurt by a church, ministry, or other Christians? Did you handle it appropriately? What do you need to do make things right?
  - What does it mean for God to love you fervently?
  - How and where do you need to show fervent love to others?
- What words would you use to describe your prayer life?
  - Are you satisfied with your prayer life?
  - What keeps you from being where you want to be?
  - What has helped you grow?
  - Share something that has helped you grow in your prayer life.
  - Have you ever kept a prayer list? What can you share about the experience?
  - Are there any specific tips or techniques you can share?
  - What do you need prayer for in your life? Who else can you be praying for?
  - Where should you strike the forces of darkness and where can you request resupply for the family of God?
- What do you think of the difference between hospitality and entertaining?
  - What makes you grumble about showing hospitality?
  - When was the last time you had someone over?
  - Who could you have over next?
- What gift(s) have you received? How are you using it/them?
  - What gifts do you see in others? What gifts do they see in you?
- Are you serving with the ability God supplies? And, how does your service glorify God through Jesus Christ? Can you tell someone else how you see God through them and their acts of service? Take time to praise God for using that person.

- Recommended resources on prayer
  - Pastor Jeff's sermons from Luke 11 available on our website or in the app
  - A Praying Life by Paul Miller (good for everyone)
  - Praying with Paul by DA Carson (better for those seeking to grow)