

Heavenly Minded Discipleship

1 Peter 4:7-11 (ESV)

Patrick Murphy / September 8, 2019

When you think of discipleship, following Jesus to become like Jesus, what activities do you associate with discipleship? Prayer, reading the word...? When was the last time you thought about Heaven? Not just what will be in Heaven but imagined actually being there. Imagining what it will be like walking with God. I'm sure you're aware of the importance of prayer, love, serving, and worship, but have you thought about your expectation of eternal life with Christ as a spiritual discipline?

Meditating on the Lord's promise of Heaven became a spiritual discipline of in college. Since then it has been an indispensable catalyst for greater spiritual growth. I do it in time of extreme challenges and also light frustrations. Often it leads to prayer, worship, service. One time in particular I was in Yosemite Valley with my youth group for our summer camp. We'd be camping at a lake about 1.5 hours outside of the Valley and take one day to explore and eat in the Valley. One year I had an awesome Leader who wanted to take a group of kids on a hike. Vernal Falls is the lower falls then about 2 miles farther up the trail was Nevada Falls. My leader decided to go the farther falls when I said not to for time sake. I'm a bit frustrated and my dad voice is not far from coming out when my second toughest student at the time started throwing pinecones at the back of my head. What do you do in that moment? Bible school or seminary does not prepare you for that moment.... What would you have done? I had Colossians 1:27 in my head that day so I began to say on repeat, "Christ in me, the hope of glory." After ignoring him and flooding my mind with what it would be like to walk with Jesus I had a great amount of peace. I didn't try harder or stuff it down to blow up latter. Instead I thought of what was true of me, I am destined for eternity.

When you think of following after Jesus, do you think about being like him or being with him. The best way to be like someone is by spending time with them. That's why this morning we're going promote the essential disciplines of prayer, genuine love, use of gifts, and accurate worship with the need

Prayer

1 Peter 4:7-11

Turn with me to 1 Peter 4:7-11. As we come to this passage, I want you to know Peter is writing to a church expecting persecution and an uncertain future. They did not know what to expect fully, but it was going to be tough. Peter's is writing to cultivate hope and perseverance within the church to hold on to the hope they have in Jesus. Now in chapter 4, he leaves us with his expectations of what we ought to do while we wait upon the Lord.

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1. We should expect the return of Christ.

He begins, “**7 The end of all things is at hand;**” (ESV) The end is *telos*, and Peter is referring to the consummation of God's Plan. Every piece is in place, every i dotted, t crossed, and we wait for Christ's return and rule. Peter is reiterating what he said before in 1 Peter 1:13, “**13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**”

It is a challenge to live in the present, . Let's sit under the weight of scripture to move and motivate our head and our hearts to embrace a continual picture of eternity.

1. **Romans 13:11 - For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.**
2. **Hebrews 10:25 - 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**
3. James 5:8-9 - 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord, is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.
4. 1 John 2:18 - ¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour.
5. Jude 1:18 -

When played football in high school we'd have Hell week the last two weeks of August, two practices a day for two weeks and the first practice of the day was mainly conditioning. Sprints for hours, it was brutal as I remember it but and we'd get a couple of water breaks and the water tasted so good. We'd get that break and it would be just enough to prepare us to sprint more. We were all looking forward to practice being over, but those breaks prepared us for the next challenge. We didn't have clocks and we had no idea how many sprint we were going to do but we go through them.

Expecting eternity with Christ is the best image we can set before us daily, but we ought to hang that picture prominently in our life, so no matter where we are, we're reminded of what awaits us. So we need a frame to hold that picture up. Just like there are four sides to a picture frame, Peter gives us four essential disciples that are fueled by our hope for eternity. While we wait for that day to come, we secure that hope and entrench it in our minds through:

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2. We eagerly wait with unhindered prayer.

1 Peter 4:7b, "therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers."

Prayer is the access to all the spiritual resources our lives need because we are accessing THE source and sustainer of ALL THINGS. Peter says to pray, but give qualifiers to that prayer, adding that it be self-controlled and sober-minded.

A self-controlled prayer is not carried away with an incorrect view of yourself or God. God must be in his proper place in our prayer. Think of Jesus' example of prayer in Matthew 6, he starts the prayer saying, "Our Father who is in Heaven, Holy is your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven." And a sober-mind does not have its senses dulled and is alert keeping watch over its thoughts and interpretations. The world around these believers is characterized by false rationality in Greek philosophy and paganism characterized by drunken coming in prayer as the local taverns. God wants us to be opposed to that way of life by being self-controlled. Prayer is essential for a lasting relationship with God; we ought to have vibrant prayer through a self-controlled mind and a sober-mind.

So how do we become self-controlled and sober-minded? Through a renewed mind.

Practicing praying through the Scriptures. Sometime, you may not know what to pray, or how to pray, or you might not even want to pray, in those moments pray his words back to Him.

A dull and undisciplined mind hinders the true joy intended to be found in prayer because we are not in fellowship with God. Jesus retreated away to pray to be with the father. Unhindered prayer knows who the Father is and who we are in his creation and enjoys prayer. I retreat to prayer because I know how the Lord. Prayer no longer feels like a burden or a chore.

Stable and steadfast prayer is fueled by excited anticipation for us to behold God with unveiled eyes. When we can for our first time, walk with God in the garden in coolness of the day. We were made for it, and we will return to it. But until that day comes, we wait for it in prayer and get a taste of what it will be like knowing he is with us. Prayer, however, is not the only discipline activated by an eternal perspective. Our love towards one another is the second piece of the frame holding up the image Christ's return.

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3. We eagerly wait living with genuine love.

**“⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”**

When we read this, we should think of Jesus’ declaration that every command hinges on the 1st and 2nd great commandments. To love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Every Gospel writer includes the imperative to love one another, and Paul emphasizes, "especially unto those of the household of faith." If you're ever in doubt about what to do with your life, Peter says, "Above all" love people and show hospitality. I am interested in the adjective he used here of "earnestly" which modifies our love within our relationships. Why earnestly, which means unwaveringly or without end? He tells us, it covers a multitude of sins.

Our love does not erase or forgive sin, that alone is the authority of Christ. Our genuine love towards the people God has placed in our midst as way he draws people into his saving grace. Peter is quoting Proverbs 10:12, "**Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.**" Genuine love for one another **Loving earnestly eases tensions, breaks hostility, overcomes challenges, softens hearts, and comforts brokenness. Peter is commanding this vast commitment of love because it Christ-like love.** Are you confident your love has that kind of ability? What if earnest love disappears from our congregation what would our fellowship become? We might view each other’s words with suspicion, misunderstand one another’s actions, and conflicts would abound. It’s what Hebrews 12:15 would call a “root of bitterness” that springs up causing a great deal of trouble amongst the body. Loving one another is difficult. We can all annoy one another easily and earnest love will seek to forgive. Nowhere is that more apparent than through the expression of love in hospitality.

Hospitality is a specific example of loving earnestly. Hospitality means letting people into our homes, making them feel welcome, meeting their needs, providing fellowship and acceptance. In Peter’s context it is a general willingness to share your world with people you have a loose connection too. Taking in a distant relative or housing someone on a cross country journey that your bother knows.

When Paul crashed on the Island of Malta and the locals showed him “unusual kindness” they made a fire, gave him food, even though they knew he was from a roman prison ship. In fact, while Paul was gathering more firewood, he was bit by a snake and they said, “No doubt this man is murderer, though he escaped from the see, justice has not allowed him to live.” Paul shook the snake off and lived. The Maltese people thought he was a god and cared from him for 3 more days. When he left, they gave him whatever he needed to complete his journey. This is a great image of loving endlessly. When people, especially fellow believers, walk through our doors whether it be at home or here at church, we ought to love like the Maltese did.

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This Hospitality and expression of love will not be easy. We'll want to complain and grumble but despite those things we are to still show hospitality. So we have unhindered prayer and genuine love now Peter draws to being good steward of the grace we've been give while we wait for Christ's return.

4. We eagerly wait as faithful stewards of God's grace.

1 Peter 4:10-11a,b - "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..."

Every believer possesses a gift, administered by the Holy Spirit and used to build up and bless the body of Christ. They are not our gifts; instead, we are stewards of God's gifts. They are not for our glory and exaltation, but God's glory and his exaltation.

What gifts? Administration, Discernment, Evangelism, Encouragement, Giving, Leadership, Shepherd, Wisdom, and more than that. Peter breaks the gifts into two categories, qualifying their expression in the church their effect. Those who speak, speak on behalf of God and those who serve, serve by the strength of God. Our church and every other local church is a storehouse of God's gifts and talents. Wisely used by the body of believers **"in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."** God expects his gifts of grace used and exercised in our church. So, do you know your gifts, do you know it but don't know how to use it, or do you know your gift and are choosing not to use it?

I can remember the day I became confident speaking in front of people. It was like a change in my mind that became exciting. Let me paint the picture. I just got back from a high school show choir competition in San Francisco. Yes, I was also the captain of my football team and was in show choir. If you take a deep dive into my Facebook pictures, I'm pretty sure you'll find some funny pictures of me with a sparkly vest, but that is beside the point. I get back from the trip, its Monday, 1st period, Mrs. Henry's English class she walks up to my desk right as the bell rings and says, "Your up." I look at her and say, "Up for what?" My stomach sinks a bit, and she says, "for your book report presentation." ...I had completely forgotten... I make my way to the stage and start connecting the book to my life experiences, sharing how I thought the author did a good job, and This booklet is full of leaders who either have the gift of shepherding, leadership, or facilitations. They give hours a week to lead each one of these classes or community groups. Why would they do it?

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It brings glory to God and fill them with joy to the point I am sure most if not all could not think of not leading. I can remember time early in my ministry when I thought about pursuing a job outside of vocational ministry and I quickly realized I would be empty if I stopped preaching or leading, or shepherding in the church. I can't imagine doing anything else. When God uses us to build up his church there is quite literally nothing I'd rather be doing.

There are a lot of ways to find out what your gifting is, but the absolute best is the encouragement given from the believers around you. As people get to know you, serve with you, and love you, your gift will be apparent. Get in community and the church will be the church.

On the bottom of the frame we have prayer, on the sides we have genuine love and faithful stewardship of our gifts to complete our picture frame Peter shows us Accurate Worship. We eagerly wait with accurate worship.

5. We eagerly wait with accurate worship

1 Peter 4:11c - "To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Peter ends with worship. The very thing we were created to do without hesitation or direction, but because of sin have become self-worshippers. Our anticipation of Christ's return or the Lord's calling us home is marred and undermined when our worship is misdirected and misinformed. Peter directs our worship to center around God's glory and rule. Peter is bookending what he started in verse 7. The end of all things is at hand. The creator is returning to rule.

We can misdirect our worship with ease and make our time, struggles, about us.

We have a powerful promise of the Lord's glorious return, do you dwell on that promise daily? It is my suspicion we think more of how we ought to pray, love, serve in the church, and worship his name than we spend time meditating on our future. You might not have expected to be where you are now, but you're here. God, in His grace and mercy to us, has given us his expectation, for us to be with him forever in eternity. Are we adopting his eternal hope for our lives resulting in unhindered prayer, genuine love, faithful service, and continuous worship?

Without a constant heavenly hope our prayers are spotty, our love is shoddy, our gifts are powerless, and our worship muted. A heavenly gaze and wonder unveils our eyes to the presence of Heaven already here. ***When I envision walking with God, I'm reminded of his voice in sermons, songs, and friends.

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When I examine what life will be like without want or need, I am comforted by my needs are already met and every day how I'm given my daily bread. When I marvel at the future of enjoying every aspect of work and exerting effort, I'm moved to know how I'm already filled with joy at service rendered to God. When I think of living life continually in the radiance of God's glory, I'm humbled by the way the sun warms my back in the crisp chill of the morning.

You might have heard the phrase, "Be so heavenly focused that you are no earthly good." I think that is a load of garbage. Peter is stressing to a church caught between serving the Lord by enduring hardship and uncertainty or return to worldly living. He reminds them twice: Jesus is on his way, the end of all things is at hand, so pray unhindered, love genuinely, serve faithfully, and worship endlessly. Taste the joy of Heaven by living like one who already apart of it.