

LIVING AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 4:8–11

[8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. [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—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

OBSERVATION

Most of chapter 4 of this book is riddled with how to live according to the grace of God and unpacking how the world will treat those who live uniquely like Christ. Peter shows believers how to live in the unbelieving world and with one another. The difficulty of living righteously in the world is contrasted by the grace of living in community with other believers.

- “Above all” is a certainly firm phrase and it implies that we spend more time focusing on how to live together with the faith family than on how others respond to our life. Peter urges the believer to not let suffering in the world extinguish love within the body of believers. When it comes to covering multitudes of sins, one may quickly see a path of masking personal sin, but this is not the point. Love that covers a multitude of sins is not connected to Proverbs 10:12 as much aligning with James 5:19-20. The point is to show how loving one another allows you to see the failures/sins and continue in relationship—much like a husband and wife know the greatest faults of the other but maintain that he or she is the greatest blessing on earth. Love does not overlook sin, but it does allow people to not define/identify others exclusively by their sin (v. 1).
- It’s my opinion that a huge shift of the church is happening in hospitality. Hospitality in the past was expressed by how people loved well in their homes, opening up to guests and embracing people as family. Now the home is a refuge with limited invitation, and hospitality is expressed as people connect to the church gathering exclusively (hospitality team). Enough with opinion, as it was not asked for nor as helpful as the Word. Peter writes that we should show hospitality to one another without grumbling. The church should treat one another as honored guests, sharing lives and homes with one another as they have

opportunity. Grumbling comes from inconvenience, but the church has a chance to love one another differently, seeing people as gifts from God (v. 9).

- Every gift that a believer possessed was given to God (for worship and co-laboring) and for the service of those who are the church (to build up). All gifts are given by the grace of God and as such should be treated with great care for neighbor over self. Many gifts in the church are highlighted while others seem to never be noticed, but all gifts work uniquely to express the multifaceted grace of God. Peter lists some gifts, though not exhaustively, but as examples to see gifts and their impact. A church is never without gifted individuals but may be without the impact of these gifts because they are withheld by those whom God has blessed. The greatness of gifts is measured by the glory given to God not the kingdom built through them by man (vv. 10-11a).
- Every believer was saved and given gifts to glorify God through Christ. Christ glorified God and gave life to others to do the same. Every use of gracious gifting points to a good God who gave generously to see His bride (the church) beautified different from the world. As Abraham Kuyper rightly states “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” As the church lives in love, grace, and service through gifting, it cries out to the world, “Christ is king forever (v. 11b).”

OBEDIENCE

The church has a chance to love and serve one another without loss. In fact Peter points out that loving and serving points to the infinite glory of God.

- How do you love others in the body of Christ? Do you define people by their failures or who they are in Christ?
- Invite someone from your church into your home...often. One may never feel like an honored guest at your church through your actions, but they will most definitely feel that way in your home. Ask yourself if you see people as inconvenient or as God’s gift to host.
- Has the church been as impacted by your gracious gifting as much as your personal life? List the gifts God has given you (ask others for help) then ask God where you can apply these gifts. It is likely that a spiritual gifts test is far less revealing than using gifts in the church and seeing God give growth.

PRAYER

Seek time with the Lord to ask Him to help you connect with the church beyond Sundays. Ask Him for names of people to bring into your home/work to display His love. Ask God to give you a passion for people whom you can serve with your gifts. Set your heart to explaining the glories of Christ this week, in prayer and with the body of Christ.