

1 Peter 4:7-11

4 Simple Marks of a Church Living With the Urgency of Eternity

1) Level Headed Prayer.

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

Peter is not saying that being clear headed is what allows us to pray...But so that we can pray more accurately...effectively...clear headed...God's purposes and character in view

John Piper - *"Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den...Until you know that life is war, you cannot know what prayer is for: Prayer is for the accomplishment of a wartime mission."*

David Powlison: *The driving focus of biblical prayer asks God to show himself, asks that we will know him, asks that we will love others. It names our troubles. It names our troublesome reactions and temptations. It names our holy desires. It names our God, his promises, and his will. When someone asks you, "How may I pray for you?," imagine the impact of responding in a manner such as this: "I've had a lot on my mind lately, and have been inattentive and irritable to those nearest and dearest to me. Please pray for me, that I will awaken and turn from my preoccupation with work pressures, recreations, health problems, or money. God promises to help me pay attention to him. Ask him to help me remember and focus. Ask him to help me to take my family and other people to heart. Pray that I will take refuge in him when the pressure is on. The Lord is my refuge, but I've been taking refuge in TV and food."*

Does Jesus' imminent return (meeting him post-death) cause you to be self-controlled and sober?

Are you living like life is war?

What have you forgotten?

Are you praying for your circumstances to change or like Powlison suggests?

When people ask for prayer for certain things, are you taking the time to discuss these heart issues?

2) Cultivates Soul Stretching Love

8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Earnestly - "stretched out"

- athlete in total physical exertion stretching out to cross the line...canvas stretched over a frame
- there are relationships that you have with people in this room that make you feel this way...like you're going to break if you keep going any longer...**the difference comes in understanding who is stretching you?**
 - if it's that person...you can tap out...gave it your best shot...someone else will love them...
 - what if it's the love of God that is stretching you? The more we feed our soul on the Grace of God in the Gospel...the more delighted we are in the love of God...feeding on this love stretches our love...it's **like when Jesus multiplied the fish and loaves**...he just took what was there and kept breaking it and spreading it...delighting in the Gospel will stretch us in love for

one another and it just keeps stretching us...we can't break...we end up loving like we have been loved.

When the Love of God is stretching you daily...when His love is nourishing your soul then you live with the strength to not hold grudges...endure injustice...not easily offended...don't have a taste for the toxic emotions like bitterness...

Who have you stopped loving? Why?
What would it look like for you to start loving that person again?
What can give you strength for that?
(What particular way that God has loved you can help you?)

3) Living With the Urgency of Eternity Cultivates Joyful Hospitality

9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. (Heb 13:2 includes **strangers**)

Gracious Hospitality means living a life "on call" to others. Much like doctors are "on call" for their patients, we are meant to live "on call" with one another "**without grumbling**". Human nature hasn't changed much since then, we still "secretly wishing that person was coming over even after you invited them.

Hospitality is hard when the warm feelings are absent. (but that's why Peter is including this!) Hospitality is not waiting until we have the right house...decor...right schedule... Hospitality is often inconvenient - cost your comfort / plans / do other things...

People all around are just looking for you to ask.

- look around...older couples / families...see these young people reach out, "**lunch**"?
- young people...see these older couples...they're the minority...reach out
- VCU is asking us for people willing to open up to internationals...

What about your house has to be perfect before folks come over?
What insecurities do you feel when its not?
Are people able to drop in on you? Why or Why not?
Is your house a source of comfort (and fun) for your Community?
For strangers? For neighbors? For not-yet-believers?

Are you looking for opportunities to be hospitable to those who's thanks/response affirms you?

Are you waiting for others to approach you instead?
Who is God calling you to engage this week? (Lets pray for them)

4) Living With the Urgency of Eternity Cultivates Grace Driven Service

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

Spiritual gifts are undeserved expressions of God's favor given to each person to serve others. There are no exceptions to this...no passive members...no exemptions. In fact, refusing to use the grace given to you to serve others is a violation against the Grace of God.

"As stewards of God's Varied Grace"

- steward - manager...like Joseph who was set in charge of Pharaoh's house and Egypt's good...use resources for good...won't hide them
- the gifts are not "ours" as they we earned them...we steward them...use them to serve others to the glory of God...
- means if you use your gift in a particular ministry...it's not 'your ministry'...

God's Grace in giving gifts is "varied"...diverse...it's as expansive as His capacity to create...

- there are 5 lists in the NT...no gift is on all 5 lists...no list has all the same gifts
- same word "gifts" used of both marriage and celibacy
- praise God...no one has all the gifts. How prideful would someone be if they did or THOUGHT they did? We need each other. Which means if someone does not USE their gift, our church, our Community suffers.

Peter speaks in 2 broad categories: "speaking and serving" We are to speak the oracles of God to one another. We are to serve by the strength that God supplies. This is to be done from grace, not our strength. And therefore not our credit, but his. But What Gifts Do I Have? Gifts are discovered not by tests, but in service.

1. Open Your Eyes
2. Identify A Need / Opportunity
3. Meet It

Opportunities to speak the Word of God and Serve for the glory of God pass us by everyday...we can be so busy trying to decide if we're "gifted" for it or not that we miss them. It's much easier and more practical than we make it out to be. Rick in prisons...Kirk homeless...Deneen kids...

Serve 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.

The Provider is always the One Praised: if it's you, you deserve the credit...if God, He gets the glory as the one who empowers His people. So, when you serve someone with your gift they should rightly thank God for the benefit...and you should be pleased with that.

Are you living in violation of God's grace?

(not loving or serving others the way God has graced you?)

What need or opportunity is around you?

What's stopping you from taking it on? (fear, inadequacy, waiting for others, pride)

What idol is behind that? How is Jesus better / bigger than that?