

Holy Living

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everybody. Let me add my welcome to Mark's and wish you good morning. My name is Vijay. I'm one of the pastors here. Do keep that passage open, 1 Peter. The American novelist Harper Lee famously said that you can't choose your family.

And that occurred to me this week as I was playing with my new son, Samuel. There's a photo of him there on your screen. There's little Samuel. He was born three months ago. I think Samuel agrees with Harper Lee that you can't choose your family.

I look quite happy, but I think Samuel is having second thoughts about his dad. But whether Samuel likes it or not, he was born to be a Henderson. And there are certain things that go with this family. So Samuel will go on beach holidays and learn to go fishing like his old man. He'll eat Indian food and all his treats will be sugar free. They're like regular treats, but with all the fun taken out.

He'll be taught to do well at school and to get a part-time job when he's 15. In this family, he'll have to barrack for Essendon because encouraging children to barrack for Collingwood is child abuse.

[1 : 12] Samuel won't be allowed a girlfriend until he's 35. But that's okay because he'll have 22 first cousins to play with, a doting set of grandparents, and a mum and dad who will smother him with affection.

You see, Samuel was born to be a Henderson. And there are certain things that go with my family. And our passage today is full of family language because that's what God has chosen us for. It seems you can't choose your spiritual family either. Peter's writing to churches in Turkey. Their faith made them look strange compared to everyone else, like foreigners from another country, aliens from another planet.

Exiles is what Peter said last week. And this context makes sense of all the family language. You see, the one thing an exile wants most of all is a sense of home.

And like Samuel, there are certain expectations of God's family. And they are our big points today. And so we're at point one in your handout. Verse 13 in 1 Peter 1.

[2 : 25] See in verse 13, the language of minds being alert.

That was the same language used when Israel fled Egypt. God told them to eat the Passover alert with their cloaks tucked into their belts.

It's what people mean when they say, gird up your loins. Be alert, ready for action. So last week, there was an amazing inheritance waiting for us.

Verse 13. Therefore, until you get it, gird up your mind. And be holy. That's the central command in these verses, to be holy.

It means being distinct, different from everything else around you. It means set apart for special use. Holiness is a way we can describe God as well.

[3 : 36] Verse 15 says, but just as he who called you is holy. You see, God is distinct as creator. While everything else is created.

He's distinct as good. While everything else is morally mixed. He's distinct as true. While everything else is compromised. And just as Henderson kids go for Essendon like their dad.

So God's kids, verse 15, must be holy in all you do like their dad. It's a family trait that he's determined we share.

Actually, God has always expected this of his family. Even in the Old Testament. Verse 16. For it is written, be holy because I am holy.

That's a quote from Leviticus. One of the purposes of the Old Testament law was to make Israel distinct from other nations. Just like their father.

[4 : 42] But holiness is a tough command for exiles. You see, Peter's churches, they already stuck out like sore thumbs. They were insulted and experienced hostility for Jesus' sake.

How tempting it would be for them to blend in. To just go with the flow. So they could have an easy life like everyone around them. Last week, my wife, Rachel, she told me.

She said when she was a teenager, she wished someone told her how strange she would feel because she was a Christian. In many ways, life would be much easier if we just went with the flow and blended in with everyone else around us.

And so what Peter does is he gives us two motivations that surround this central command about holiness. A motivation from our future and a motivation from our past.

So verse 13. Set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. In other words, gird up your mind about where you're going in the future.

[5 : 57] Fill your head with what you'll receive when Jesus is revealed at his coming in the future. And act like that now. Your other option is verse 14.

To conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. You see, the opposite of holiness is conforming to the world around us.

The opposite of setting hopes on the future is to live the evil desires of our past. The opposite of girding up our minds is the ignorance we used to live in.

Holiness will make us look opposite to everyone else. Like an alien from another planet. And Peter says that's okay. That's what God expects of his family.

When I lived in London, you could spot an Australian backpacker a mile away. Because suddenly they became more Aussie when they were abroad.

[7 : 01] Maybe because they missed home or they were worried that their identity would be lost.

When they spoke, they started speaking like Steve Irwin. You know, real like this. And they started acting like Kath and Kim.

Real proper bogans. Probably to feel more at home. And Peter agrees. He says, have your mind alert.

So alert. So ready for your homeland. That you start acting like that now. Verse 17. Live out your time as foreigners here.

In reverent fear. Our first motivation for holiness from our future. Think about where you're going. And live that way now. Second motivation.

Think about your past. And what Jesus paid to set you free. Verse 18. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors.

[8 : 04] Verse 18 here is an illustration about enslavement. The idea is that we were enslaved in a prison of an empty way of life.

It was the family trait that we inherited from our ancestors. This enslavement was eternal. Silver and gold were not everlasting enough to buy us out.

We needed something far more eternal to set us free. Verse 19. The precious blood of Christ. A lamb without blemish or defect.

Verse 20. Chosen before the foundation of the world. He's eternal. Raised to life after death. Verse 21. He is imperishable.

And this slave idea is actually a reference again to the Exodus story. Because Israel too were enslaved to an empty way of life. They too were redeemed by a lamb without blemish or spot.

[9 : 09] They too were to live in reverent fear. When Pharaoh finally let Egypt go, he said in Exodus 12. Up, leave, you and the Israelites, go.

Worship the Lord as you have requested. You see, Israel weren't redeemed to live on their own. Or to have a more comfy life in the desert.

They were set aside for family. To worship the Lord. To be in relationship with him. For us today, Jesus' blood wasn't paid to give us a more comfy standard of life.

But to bring us in relationship with God. You see, I want Samuel to excel at school. And have a career. And get married and settle down.

But Rachel and I would prefer if he loves Jesus. She and I, we always have this sort of joke. Or we nervously say, we don't care if our kids paint their hair purple.

[10 : 14] Put bolts through their nose. You know, tattoos all over the place. Black fingernails. As long as they love Jesus. I hope that we mean that. Careers and marriage, they're good things.

But if I gird up my mind. I want far more eternal things for my children. Knowing that God has created us for family.

It changes the things I'm zealous for. And the things that I can be more relaxed about. For my children. For me. We are set apart.

To be in God's family. And like any family. This one comes with brothers and sisters. And that is our second point. Look at verse 22.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth. That is holiness language. Purifying yourselves. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth. So that you have a sincere love for each other.

[11:17] Love one another deeply from the heart. I don't know what circles you move in outside of church. But are they ones characterized by sincere love for each other?

Where you work. Are people loving one another deeply? In your street. Is there much love from the heart? Or do good fences make good neighbors as they say?

Any talk on love feels a bit tough. Sometimes the hardest thing about being a Christian. Is all the other Christians. But in this church actually. I found many examples of sincere love.

That was the question as you went to a short break before. What examples of sincere love have you found? It's not necessarily acts of hugs and affection.

And the touchy feely stuff. But it's in acts of service. Such as meals prepared for those in need. It's in car rides offered. Phone calls to ask after people.

[12:21] It's about offers to pray. It's in the way we welcome newcomers. We don't just greet them. But we welcome them. How many times have you heard visitors say.

How struck they were. By the genuineness of care. They found in this place. Maybe you were one of those visitors. And now you've decided to stay. You know to be part of the family.

On Friday. A lady in our church emailed me. She demanded that she pay for something. So that I didn't have to. Yesterday at 4.30.

While I was writing. A family contacted me. To offer money. To another family. Who was doing it a bit tough. No one asked these people to do things.

They just saw a need. And they responded. Like a good family should. But commands. About love are tough.

[13:17] They should prick our conscience. Maybe as we went to a break. And we asked about acts of love. You said. Actually I've seen none of that. We're going to get things wrong. We're a dysfunctional family.

From time to time. Just two weeks ago. I had to say sorry to a family. For not showing a genuine care. We do hurt one another. We don't need to pretend to be perfect.

But this command. About love. Isn't only for the keen beans. Or for your pastor. To get better at. It's a non-negotiable. For everyone. Actually.

It's what we were born for. Verse 22. Love one another deeply. From the heart. For. You have been born again.

If we put this sentence in reverse. You have been born again. So. Love one another deeply. You see. Maybe we think God chose us.

[14:16] Just to get to heaven. Or maybe. He chose us. Just to have. A more comfy life. Peter says. No. You have been born again. So. Or to.

Love one another. Deeply. We were set apart. For family. Verse 24. All people. Are like grass. And their glory.

Is like the flowers. Of the field. The grass withers. And the flowers fall. But the word of the Lord. Endures. Forever. Isn't that a great verse. And he says. This is the word.

That was preached. To you. I don't know. If ever. A young child. Has asked you. Where babies come from. Have you ever been asked that. Where do babies come from.

My eldest son. RJ. He's about to turn six. And when his little brother. Samuel was born. A few months ago. You could see. RJ's mind. Start to put things together. Comments like.

[15:10] Oh yeah. Babies come from. Mummy's tummy. I don't think they're going to. Cut it any longer. You see. RJ's mummy. Will need to give him a lesson. A biology lesson. Pretty soon. But let me give you.

A biology lesson. Human babies. They start. With sperm. Or a seed. Grass and flowers. Also come from. A seed. But all of them.

Grow old. And die. Or as. Isaiah says. Verse 24. All people. Are like grass. And all their glory. Is like the flowers. Of the field. The grass withers.

And the flowers. Fall. And so. Here are. Some flowers. There are some flowers. There. I picked these. On Wednesday. And my daughter. Planted them in. In the dirt. To try and save them. But no good. Pretty. Pretty miserable. That's only a few days. This body.

[16:04] That you see. In front of you. And in fact. All. Human. Glory. And achievement. Are like these flowers. They will. Fall. Behind me.

I think. You can see. Lovely flowers. We get. From the church. Much better than. This daisy. Lovely flowers. But in a week's time. We'll have to change them over. They are.

A picture. Of human. Glory. And my body. It may look okay. For a little while. But next week. They will. Fall. Just like. This body. Christian.

Babies. Are. Different. They have. Verse 23. Been born again. Not of perishable seed. But of imperishable. Through the living. And enduring. Word of God.

You see. That Bible. In your hand. Is a powerful. Seed. When people read it. And believe it. They really are. Born again. God's name. Is on our birth certificate.

[17:02] Christian babies. Endure. Forever. And the reason he did this. Verse 22. Love one another deeply. From the heart.

Like family. Why? Because you have been born again. Here in Melbourne. I think the definition of loving others. Means leaving them alone.

Not interfering. With their lives. You know. Good fences. Make good neighbors. Remember. But Peter says. That our love. Should be sincere. And deep. And from the heart.

And so I take it. That means. Chapter 2. Verse 1. Getting rid of all malice. And all deceits. A hypocrisy. Envy. And slander. Of every kind.

And again. Here. With a tough command. We'll have to check. Our consciences. We don't want these. To become the accusations. Of the outside world. Your church. Is so full of hypocrites.

[17:58] You're also. Malicious. On social media. A sincere. Brotherly love. Will be tough. Especially when you picture. That certain person. In the church.

You might feel like. There's no way. You can love. We're going to need. An energy drink. If we're going to do this. Chapter 2. Verse 2. Like newborn babies.

Crave pure. Spiritual milk. So that by it. You may grow up. In your salvation. Now that you have tasted. That the Lord. Is good. On Friday.

Just for an experiment. Little Samuel. When he was crying. I stuck my thumb. In his mouth. Obviously. His mother wasn't looking. But I just. Stuck my thumb.

In his mouth. To shut him up. And I couldn't believe. How strong. His feeding response. Was. These little gums. Lapsed onto my thumb. And. It just started devouring. You know.

[18:53] Those poor mummies. I was. Thinking at that point. Well Peter says. When it comes to the Bible. All Christians. Are to have. Little Samuel's. Feeding response. There.

To crave. That pure. Spiritual milk. Devour. To desire. Powerfully. The word. And when we're not being fed.

We're to act. Like crybabies. In this church. Andrew Price. He protects the pulpit. It's not an open mic. But the way. For you. To protect the pulpit.

Is not to let him. Water down the word. Same goes for me. Make sure we give you. The good stuff. The cry room. Over there.

It's where. Little crying babies. Are whisked away. But actually. Those little ones. Are showing the rest of us. How it's done. If you don't get the spiritual milk. Where.

[19:49] Where. In our conversations together. If I only talk to you about the weather. Or coronavirus. Where. Where. Give me.

Some of the good stuff. Vijay. We don't have to quote. Chapters and verses. At each other. Why not just tell me. How God's word. Has warmed your heart.

Lately. Let me say that again. We don't have to quote. Chapters and verses. At one another. But why not. Tell each other. How God's word. Has warmed your heart.

Recently. See. I need you. To tell me. About. Jesus. And his. Love. And what that means. For. My love. Tell me about.

What a difference. He's made in your life. Or how some verses. Have helped you. Keep telling me. Until. I am a grown up. Christian. It might feel.

[20 : 46] A bit awkward. At first. But over time. These conversations. Will be as natural. As a baby. Feeding on mother's milk. Here in Australia. I wonder if you've noticed this.

Here in Australia. There's a weird dynamic. Amongst. Churches. The dynamic is. You're either a Bible church. Or a love church. And you sort of. Have to pick.

Which sort of church. You want to be. Be part of. Here in Melbourne. I think our church. Is distinct. Because we're a Bible focus. But it would be sad.

If people thought that. Because we only love. Knowledge. Or chapters. And verses. Andrew and Mark. Will tell you. We prioritize. The word.

Because. Verse 22. Is our focus. We want to be. A loving church. Where else. Are we going to hear. About. Jesus and his cross. About God's graciousness.

[21 : 41] And mercy. Where else. Will I get. Words. That will help me. Through the tough times. In life. All these words. The spirit. Will use. To grow me up.

Into salvation. Peter says. Keep craving. The word. This is. The fuel. That will cause us. To love. Sincerely.

And deeply. And from. The heart. As exiles. Don't you want to be. In a family. Like that. And as far as.

Holiness goes. I reckon. That will stand out. A mile. In a city. Like ours. So let me pray. Father God. Thank you. That you have. Called us. To be. In your family. To be your children. Thank you. That you have. Set us apart. For this purpose. Please.

[22 : 38] Father. With minds. That are alert. Would we fix. Our eyes. On our future. And what Jesus. Has done for us. In the past. With minds. That are alert.

Father. Would we crave. Your word. Please. Would your word. Cause us. To love. Help us. To love. Those people. That we don't love.

Forgive us. Father. For times. Of not loving others. Help us. To practice. These family traits. Of holiness. And love. We need your help.

In Jesus name. Amen.