

# 1 Peter 4:7-11 "In the End, This is What Matters"

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Date: 07 May 2023

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[0:00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Good morning. If I didn't say it earlier, my name is Bill Herrett. I'm an associate pastor here at Southwood. I have the privilege of working with our students and our children and our families. And I'm grateful for the opportunity to get up here today and share with you from God's Word. Let me pray for our time before we get started. Father, we're grateful for this time to pause and celebrate our seniors.

Lord, may we remember them in our prayers. May we remember them as we walk through these next few weeks. May we be encouragements to their parents. May we be encouragements to them. Lord, help us to have a vision to understand that you will continue to be at work amongst them and in them and through them as the years continue on.

And Lord, you are deeply concerned about the work you're doing in them, more so than what you want to do through them. So Lord, be with our seniors. May they savor your goodness, your blessing.

[1:10] And may they see Jesus as the clear and wonderful Savior that he is. Lord, would you use today as we study your Word, would you guide us by your inerrant, infallible Word to your truth.

So that our hearts, our lives, and all that we are are changed for your sake, for your glory, so that we might honor you. Lord, we thank you and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. If you're, I'm going to say a number. All right. Twelve billion. Twelve billion dollars. Okay. Twelve billion dollars. Okay. A book series that sold millions of copies. That is well known if you were to walk through any major bookstore, maybe if they even still exist, for the handful that still are around, you would recognize the cover probably.

And then I want to talk about a book that's literally sold in the thousands. This is a resource book we use in our children's and our youth ministry called Show Them Jesus, Teaching the Gospel to Kids.

[2:19] And I want to compare two things. I just want to take a moment to compare two things. Okay. There was a book written years ago in the 90s called DOS for Dummies. Right.

If you've ever heard of the Four Dummies series, basically they are comparable to, and again, kids don't use this word at home. Idiots guide to whatever.

However, so they're these shortcut books that try to simplify and condense down information so that you can understand.

The first book was called DOS for Dummies, an operating system for computers. And it was meant to make it simple for some of us to learn and do DOS. I don't even know what do DOS means, but anybody here who's an engineer and smarter than me, you can tell me why I'm dumb and that's fine with me.

It wouldn't hurt my feelings. But then this series came out. It became more than just the book about DOS. It was like, if you want to, you can literally get on Amazon and be like, the Bible for Dummies.

[3:20] Or, you know, there are all sorts of books that have been given to the world through this series in order that we might find an easy shortcut, a way to understand things, a way to make our lives easier and simpler.

And because of, because he's come out in the 90s. And if you remember, all of us were like, we got to go hang out at Barnes & Noble at some point, whether it's the mall or over at, I can't remember the name of the shopping center over there right now.

What's it called? Anyone? What's it called? Valley Bend. Like, if you're going over there, there's a great place to hang out still, I think. But you would see this sea of these for dummies books.

Okay. And the goal was that it would be a clear and straightforward communication about how to do something. Okay. And those books were immensely popular.

And I love that about our passage today, too, that it's clear and it's straightforward. It's instruction. It helps me. I like straightforward communication.

[ 4 : 25 ] If you're, if you have interacted with me, I don't like being, or I don't like being beat around the bush. I don't like, I want you to talk to me through the eyeballs, say what you say and mean it. Right.

And so I love that. And I love that the passage today is very straightforward. And if we, if we really held on to what this book was going to tell us, and if we cling to, tightly to the reality that I want the most efficient and direct, and I want to be the most successful Christian I can be, and I can take these principles and I can apply them, and I will become a level 22 Christian.

Right. You know, that's, that's not how it works. That's not how it works. Even though this is straightforward and helpful and encouraging, I'm fearful that we might not do the work that Jesus is calling us to in the way that we're called to.

This book, Show Them Jesus, which I'm reading with some of our staff. I know some of our children's ministry staff have read it in the past. I know some of our volunteers have read it, but here's, it's talking about creating a gospel environment in this, this case.

And I want to read to you just this, this passage. And it's a warning for me because I need to be warned. And I think it's a warning for us when we read direct kind of constructive, helpful Christian living statements.

[ 5 : 50 ] It says, talking about kids and it's talking about church kids as much as visitors, they need this idea that the world teaches them that success comes from feeling good about themselves or being the best.

And sometimes that philosophy creeps into church. They quickly move from being Christians to believing they have to be the best Christians. And my goal for teaching this today is not that we would remember that this is what's going to help us all become, we're the best Christians.

We're going to be the best Christians in Huntsville. So I want us to become people who trust in Jesus more. I want us to become people who see how Jesus works out the gospel in our lives in a healthy and beautiful way that calls us to honor and worship him with all that we are.

And so I don't want us to read these things and think, okay, cool, I can create a checklist and become a better, I'm going to be the best Christian when I leave this place. And the best Christian we can be is one who has seen their own sin and admitted it before the Lord and laid themselves down before our King, trusting him and his work of the cross.

And so my fear as we teach sometimes these instructions or these commands is that we will leave Jesus behind and just attempt to be just the best Christians. And that can be true of our graduates too.

[ 7 : 19 ] If you're going off to college next year, you can get caught up in trying to become the best Christian you can be. Or perhaps even just getting your identity or yourself tied up into things that are not who you really are.

And what's amazing about this passage is that it's, in a lot of ways, it's holistic. And so let's read it together and then we'll talk about why it's this holistic picture for us to understand.

What does it mean to live as Christians? So let's read. This is God's word from 1 Peter chapter 4. We're going to read verses 7 through 11. The end of all things is at hand.

Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

[ 8 : 25 ] 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. I'm going to take today's passage and I'm going to break it down into three things because it's a, I think it is a holistic passage if you look at it this way.

And I think there's reasons why we should look at it this way. Because sometimes that we live in a world where we reject that the gospel, the truth of who Jesus is, has its fingerprints on every part of

our lives.

As a person who kind of played Christian in the Christian world as a high school student, I was like, well, yeah, I'll do all the Christian things over here. But when I'm in the locker room or with my buddies or when I'm out on the weekends, my life did not look that way.

And it wasn't until I experienced Christ in college that I knew that, that I began to learn that Jesus is holistically a part of everything that we're doing. He doesn't want just a small piece of who we are.

[ 9 : 33 ] He wants the whole thing. And so we may, we may come to these Sunday mornings where we've compartmentalized, or we've said that Jesus doesn't belong here, or the gospel doesn't belong here.

But the reality is the language of Peter tells us about an engagement of our whole selves. And I think it's in three ways, right? It's that he engages our head, he engages our heart, and he engages our hands.

And that's really oversimplified. And that's an easy thing that we say a lot in church. But I'll point out why those things that, things that are true here in this passage. But first I want to address this first verse.

First, I titled our sermon, In the End, This Is What Matters. And if you're a child of the 90s and the early 2000s, you might be recalling the Lincoln Park lyrics.

And it's just a reverse on those. In the end, this is what matters. It's in the Lincoln Park lyrics, it says nothing really matters. But the gospel points us to the thing that matters.

[ 10 : 36 ] And that is Jesus himself. And so the end of all things is at hand. Isn't it a part of this passage that tells us that Jesus is coming the next day?

Jesus is returning. Peter is talking to us about the nature of God's redemptive work. He's telling us that all these things have come to pass. That Jesus' death, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven.

We are in, as it stands, we're in this latter part. The end of Jesus' work, the end of God's redemptive work throughout all of history. And so it's this time that we still live in now.

The time that we talk about being the now and the not yet. That Jesus has ushered in, started to usher in his kingdom here on earth. And yet we are not yet fully made whole and complete.

It's not yet done. We still live in this tension of time. And so we live in this tension of time. And because we live in this tension of time, because there is still sin there, because we still have struggles, because we need to be reminded about this big picture holistic life that we're called to live in Christ.

[ 11 : 48 ] And so I want to ask the question, how does God engage our head in this passage? And it's, to me, I've just broke it down into three sections.

And so just, we're going to look at verse seven. It says this, The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Okay, so let's, sober-minded, right?

So there we go. We're going to use that word and we're going to cling to, God wants us to engage our heads. What we are called to do as we think on this life we have in Christ, right?

He's calling us to do two things in our minds, right? To be self-controlled and sober-minded. Okay?

And in this passage, he has in mind some of the sins that we talked about last week that Will preached on in these earlier verses, talking about living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, all the things that are happening in verses three through five that Peter is speaking about.

He's calling us to then assert our minds and focus our minds on the things that are above. To be sober-minded and to be self-controlled means for us, not just that we are avoiding things that might alter our state, whether, you know, drinking, drugs, whatever you may— He's not just talking about those things.

[ 13 : 17 ] He's talking about the kind of things additionally, not just those things, but the reality of being people who understand the time we live in as well. So to be self-controlled and sober-minded doesn't just mean that we're avoiding certain sins, and that's a good thing as well.

But it does mean that we also understand the world we live in here and now today. And so God is engaging our head so that we might think about what in the world is happening and how am I reacting to engaging this world.

So you and—I don't know if you felt this way, but I can at least speak to my own sin for the past three weeks. I know that May is not—if you're a parent, May is also a hard month.

I feel like there's always something every weekend. There's always something every night. There's something that goes on. And I'm—we have kind of been in the midst of a stretch where we are very busy people. That may not be true for all of you, but for the past few weeks I have felt very thin. Very thin. We get—we get hurried and hectic. We think about the things that go on in our lives. We think about our work. We think about our children.

[14:42] We think about our activities. We think about, oh gosh, did I sign up for the right summer camp? Oh no, do I have the right child care? Do I have the right day care? What's happening with this? What's going on this? I get that way.

Sometimes we get overwhelmed with worry and fear, and I'm sure as some of the parents of these graduates can attest, there is an element of worry and fear as they think about the future. There's an element. I'm not going to—no one's confessed anything to me. I can only imagine it. And so there's this reality that we're called to engage our thoughts, our sinful thoughts, our struggles. And why does he call us to be self-controlled, looking at the things that have an impact on us in our lives, and looking at the things that—the sins that can change who we are? Why does he ask us to engage this? Well, we can say for the—we say the passage says for the sake of our prayers.

[15:48] And what is prayer but our relationship and communication with our Heavenly Father? Right? He's calling us to this life not for the sake of being good at praying.

I'm going to be the best Christian. I'm going to pray really well. We need people to pray together as God's people, as we've even announced this week. But so that we might be in the right prayerful relationship with our Father.

So as God calls us to engage our minds, it's a call to engage for the sake of our relationship with Him. And Peter has in mind as he talks about this, he's not just talking about just like praying and generally.

He's talking about these repeated, continual acts of prayer to our Lord. Right? I think this is what we need to do.

We need to be people who engage our minds. This is how God has called us to engage our heads with this, so that we might be people who lovingly communicate and talk to our Heavenly Father.

[17:05] And so you and I need this. And I'll be honest, this idea of rejecting that the gospel touches all of my life, it happens.

We compartmentalize, we take it apart and we say, this is what's going to happen. And I'll go home after a day of work. And as a pastor, I'll confess that I'll get to a point where I'm like, I just need one less church thing on my mind right now.

I need it. And I don't know if you feel that way if you say, I just need, and I turn myself to things, particularly I will confess that I will numb myself by, oh, I'm just, I can scroll through Instagram and live vicariously through other people's recipes and hunting experiences and fun things that, oh, places I'll never visit, but at least I can just numb myself by escaping.

So what does that mean for me to be sober-minded and self-controlled? What does that mean for us? How many times have I turned to things that does not identify me with our Father?

And so being sober-minded and self-controlled means we turn to God Himself, remembering who we are, that we are clinging to the grace of God, remembering His promises to us, remembering that we have an identity that transcends the things that inhabit our minds, the sins that we struggle with, the things that take over our heads.

[18:53] We remember the forgiving power of the cross, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus. We remember that we are not made, that we are no longer sinners, but we are sons and daughters of the living God.

And so He engages our head so that we might be in right relationship with Him, so that our prayers as we seek after our God, we turn to Him remembering who we are, that we are His beloved children.

So God engages our heads, but He goes on further. He engages our hearts in this passage as well. Right?

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Right? So we're using some very generic head, right? Being sober-minded, our hearts, the idea of loving one another as the Christian body, and again, reminding ourselves too that this is not a passage that is strictly, that is calling us to do these kind of things.

This is aimed at people to love one another and to live in such a way amongst each other as Christians in this particular passage, in this particular portion.

[ 20 : 14 ] So that this is actually how we're called to care for each other. That for all of you that, that Kathy was talking about this view, as I look on to all these people that we are called to each other, and you can take a moment, and if you look around and you see, these are the people that we are called to love one another together.

See, he emphasizes, he gives it great importance, right? He says, above all, above everything else, love one another. So there's some emphasis here on love.

Emphasis on seeking to be people who love one another. So that you and I might remember that there's, this isn't just some, oh, be loving, be kind, but to engage one another lovingly.

See, above all, keep loving one another earnestly, right? That, that we, it's not just, not just that we are trying to love one another, in a way, keep loving one another.

We're not trying to love one another in a vacuum, where everything is just perfect and great and awesome, and everything is just so sweet and fun. Like, we've never had a problem in this church ever. No one's ever had another problem with someone in this church.

[ 21 : 32 ] That's fine. It's great. That's what's amazing about Southwood. And I love it. That no one's ever had a problem with anyone here. It's a great thing. But there's a word I want to make sure we say, keep loving one another.

There's a hesitation in the word keep. Like, keep loving one another means there's a, there's a possibility that I want to stop loving people in this room. That I want to stop loving people in the body of Christ.

Keep reminds us that there's a problem, a great theological truth about who we are. And that this is a body of sinners who have come together because of Christ.

Right? This, it's a hard thing to remember that, that first I, listen, we, we are very easily able to point out when we have been sinned against. Right? It's easy for me to be like you, no, you, you did that to me.

You did that to me. No, you remember. I know you remember. But often it's hard for us to remember that we too are the ones who sin against others in this body.

[ 22 : 38 ] And so this idea of keep means that we're hesitant at times. We're not willing to love difficult people.

We're not willing to love hard, in love in the midst of hard situations. We kind of flinch when it comes to those times. Or we give up.

Or we quit. And so we're being encouraged to love one another earnestly. Another word of saying is unflinching, never stopping.

If you can think of the, the, the way that love is described in the Jesus story of the Bible, the never stopping kind of love. He is faithful in his love.

And so there's this unflinching and earnest love that we're called to share with one another. And so it's a reminder that, because love, it covers a multitude of sins.

[ 23 : 42 ] If you remember the Apostle Paul, here's something that it remembers. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. It's not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing. But rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love covers a multitude of sin. Because we know ourselves to be sinners.

And it was the love of God that sent his own son for our sake. And I want us to think about it. Have you thought about this?

How do you react when you've been sinned against? How do you react when you've been sinned against? And how do you react when you sin against others?

[ 24 : 44 ] I imagine it's like me. There's a great valley between those two things where someone sins against me. I'm going to react pretty terribly, pretty poorly, pretty unlovingly.

But when I've sinned against others, how many times have I said, oh, it's not that big a deal. Or they probably deserved it. Oh, it's fine.

They'll be fine. It's okay. Okay. But Peter calls us to enter into something hard. Because love is not easy.

Love is sacrificial. Love is not something we just wake up and do easily. So as we think on our own brothers and sisters in this room, our own brothers and sisters across the world, we need to remember that we are a people of repentance and a people of forgiveness because we are a people who sin.

Here again, our love for one another is one of the ways that we remember if love actually covers a multitude of sins, if love allows us to engage with fellow sinners, that we ourselves must be people of repentance, people who turn from our own sin, people who turn to forgiveness.

[ 26 : 02 ] And we need to become people of grace because of the love that Christ has shown to us because of the grace he's poured out on us. One of the things that I was taught many years ago by a mentor, friend, pastor, teacher in school was that the safest person in the room is the repentant person.

The safest person in the room who's the person who's asked for forgiveness. I have become a big advocate of just owning when I am wrong. I know I act like I know a lot of things sometimes if you've ever had any interaction with me and there's a lot of people smiling that make me scared. But I'm happy to admit when I'm wrong. If I've done something or hurt someone, again, I don't say that like to be like, oh, look at me.

I have tried to take to heart this reality that the safest person in the room is the person whose sin has been forgiven. And Christ's work on the cross has forgiven our sin.

It has paid the penalty that we could not. And so we are able to be people of repentance, people who ask for forgiveness, people who give forgiveness luxuriously because Jesus has poured out his grace in abundance on us.

[ 27 : 38 ] And so we're called to engage our hearts amongst each other here as God's people. And so we've talked about our heads and our hearts and we're going to try and finish with our hands here in a second as we keep our eyes on the time.

But how does Peter call us to engage our hands in this passage? And there's a couple of things. It's getting dirty. So we talked about our minds and we talked about our hearts and that's easy.

And now we've got to get dirty, guys. That's just how it is. We got to roll around in the mud and we got to engage with one another more so than we want to. And the word that gets used here is show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Without grumbling. That we're called to show this radical hospitality. And we're talking about in this period in the church, hospitality was necessary.

It was the only way the church would survive. People were under persecution. People were suffering. People were looking for places to stay. They were looking for hospitable places for Christians to be cared for and loved by fellow believers.

[ 28 : 52 ] And if you can imagine how hard it is if you all of a sudden you get a knock on the door and there's like a family of eight who showed up and said, hey, we knew you were fellow believers.

We need somewhere to stay tonight. And you're like, hold on one second. Are you kidding me? Just right now? I was just about to get all this stuff done and I've got all this going on in my life and I can't believe.

Sure, come on in, guys. Right? In Peter's day, there was a lot of, it was costly to show hospitality. Not just financially. Right? Not just by way of your reputation. Right? Because then you might be identified amongst the Christians. Right? It was, it might be maybe culturally to the people in your neighborhood, in your town.

Right? It was costly to you to share hospitality with others, to invite people into your home, to care for them, but to do it without grumbling was what Peter was calling us to.

[ 29 : 59 ] We're called as people as we engage with one another to care for one another in these times. There's wonderful things that you just are simple and easy that happened in our church this week.

Meal trains for people. Visits in the hospital. Visits at home. People being invited over to meals after service today.

There's this great reality that we have as Christians and I think it's one of those things that actually will transform our entire world and culture if we really practiced it well.

And again, we don't practice it well. I don't practice it well. Of this radical hospitality, welcoming our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ into our homes and then how that spills out into our neighborhoods and our communities.

It will have this radical, transformative impact on our world. If people saw us loving one another as our meditation says, loving one another as Christ has called us to.

[ 31 : 05 ] And so there's this sentiment that we need to remember that this is what we're called to, that we're called to draw one another in, to bring each other into relationship with one another through the act of hospitality.

And I'm going to tell you a story and I didn't clear it with him. He's sitting in the back so don't look back there. Everybody just keep your eyes up here. But I personally have experienced that here at Southwood. If you don't know this about me, I have previously served at Southwood years and years ago before I had children, years and years ago before I was married and I was single. I was in my 20s and I'm from South Carolina. There's no reason I should know anyone in Huntsville, Alabama. I don't. I do now because I've lived here multiple times.

But when I was 24 and I moved here, I didn't know anybody. And there was a family in the church that invited me and all the members of our youth staff at that time that were either single or not from here and different friends of ours through the church and through different places, they invited us into their home.

And if it weren't for the love that Jim and Caroline Hess showed to me, I don't think I would know what hospitality would look like. I have never felt more cared for in a church than I have here at Southwood in that season.

[ 32 : 36 ] That was a time when I was lonely. That was a time when I was struggling. That was a time when I was learning. That was a time when I was unsure. And I was invited into someone's home week after week, most Monday nights for four years that I worked here.

And we watched silly and sometimes weird television shows. We always prayed together. We always ate together. And it was beautiful. And it was a picture for me of how I'm called to model that hospitality to others because of the love that I was shown through that act.

And so, that to me is one of the ways that God calls us to engage our hands, to engage each other in this world. And it goes on in this passage, it says, it talks about how we have gifts, right?

as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

And whoever speaks is one who speaks with the oracles of God.

Whoever serves is one who serves by the strength that God supplies. And this reality is that we each have a gift. And it's a minimal one gift. You have a gift that God has given you and you're called to use it to serve the body of Christ, to serve one another as good stewards of what God's given you.

[ 33 : 56 ] And I know some of you, if you can imagine, if you're familiar with the character Goofy from the Disney area, I don't know what you call it, his franchise, I don't know. And he's like, and some of you might be saying, oh, gosh, it's not me.

I don't, I don't have any gifts to offer. This passage reminds us that each of you, no matter what, you have something. I can't tell you what it is. I can't just eyeball and be like, service, hospitality, you got, oh, you, yeah, great, you're a great teacher.

Thank you for serving. I can't do that. We're happy to help you get into like a spiritual gifts test. I've got several if you'd like to talk about it. But the Lord has given you a great gift to look into this community of people and serve.

And you're called to use it. You're called to use it for the sake of the church. And to our students, as you go off to college, you have gifts to use.

Paige, this was your life verse. This, this, this verse, this reminder that we all, every one of us have something to offer to pour out into God's kingdom, to labor, to get dirty, to get our hands and feet involved in the work of the church.

[ 35 : 15 ] And it's true of all of our students that they're not just the church waiting around. We say this occasionally, not as regularly as we ought to, but, but you're not just the church in waiting.

You're the church now. You have something to contribute, something to offer, something to live out as God's grace has been poured out onto you.

You can offer it to the God of the universe as a sacrifice to him. And, and Peter, as we finish up, says this, who is all this for?

He tells us who this is for. Again, this is why I pointed, I pulled out this book, Jesus, um, show me Jesus by, uh, if you're looking for it, Jack Klumpenauer, is because all this is for God himself.

Here in these last verses is in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion and another, dominion, another word for power forever and ever that he has all the power.

[ 36 : 17 ] He is the one who deserves all of this. That there's nothing that we're doing as we do these things, as we were given these instructions, as we're encouraged to live out our Christian lives. We're not doing so so that we might pump ourselves up.

We're not doing so so that we might build up, uh, you know, to level 94 super Christians and we can all walk around with like our shoulders like real wide and we're like, yeah, we're super Christians. It's so that we might offer back to God what is his.

I'll close with Romans chapter 12 so that this might be what we do as we leave this place. therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. this is God's word reminding us that we have put our trust in a God who saves us and that we offer all these things, all these actions, all these things we do back to him as an offering to our good and gracious Savior.

Let's pray. Father, we're grateful for our time this morning. Lord, would you bless us as we seek to honor you in our lives.

[ 37 : 48 ] May we remember that you are a God who cares about all of us, not just parts, not just pieces, but you desire to holistically engage with our hearts, our minds, and our lives.

Lord, would you bless us today so that we might honor and glorify you in all that we do. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org).