

## Five Practices for End-Times Preppers

### Servival Kit, Part 2

*1 Peter 4:7b-9*

### Discussion Guide

#### Main Idea:

We are living in the Last Days, but that does not mean we should go crazy and try to satisfy our every desire. Instead, Peter gives good, practical commands for how we should act as we wait for our Lord and Savior to return. We should be calm and continue living for God using the example of Jesus Christ's life.

#### Discussion Points:

Peter is not announcing something new when he says that the end is near. That sort of terminology and mindset is all over the New Testament referring to the time period the church exists in. The Old Testament also provides much prophecy for what will happen in the last days, so this topic would have been at least somewhat familiar for much of Peter's audience.

- Why is it important that Peter reminds his readers of the era they are living in?
- What kind of ideas would the end of all things bring to people who knew the teachings of the Old Testament?
- How do we know that we, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are still in the same time period?
- What do we have in common with the Christians Peter is writing to?

Much of the prophecy in the Old Testament about the world coming to an end is very dramatic and could be somewhat frightening.

- What kind of scenes would come to a 1<sup>st</sup> century believer's mind regarding what happens in the last days?
- What kind of emotional response comes from being told the end of all things is near?
- What does Peter tell his audience to help them keep the proper perspective on their lives?
- Does having sound judgment come naturally when thinking about the end of the world?

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

Peter tells his audience to be of sober spirit.

- What does it mean to be sober of spirit?
- Why does Peter have to give this command?
- How can being of sober spirit be seen by others?

Prayer is the driving motivation for having sound judgment and being sober of spirit according to Peter.

- What does prayer have to do with the life of a 1<sup>st</sup> century believer?
- What kind of lessons did Peter learn about prayer throughout his time as a disciple of Jesus?
- What is the importance of prayer?
- Why is it difficult to remember the necessity of prayer?
- What specifically can you do in your life to focus on your reliance of God through prayer?

Next, Peter urges his audience to continue loving each other.

- How does Peter describe the kind of love that Christians are supposed to have for one another?
- How does love benefit relationships between believers?
- Why is it important for Peter to remind people to love one another even as the end approaches?

Hospitality is an interesting topic of choice for Peter to command the church to engage in.

- What is hospitality?
- Why does Peter tell people to be hospitable and also give the required mindset behind the actions?

### **Gospel Connection:**

The end of the world is approaching, but that does not mean that we are to abandon the life that Christ commanded us to lead. Instead, we need to dig in and push even harder to honor God through our lives of selflessness and service. When Jesus came to earth, he came with a specific goal. He knew when his time on earth was drawing to a close, but he did not retreat from the relationships with his disciples or others. Instead, he pushed on and displayed the kind of love that we can not even fathom. Jesus is our example in all things, including how we should press on and persevere all the way to the end because we do not know when that will come.

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

### **Practical Implications:**

- Think:** Are you pursuing Christ and holiness like you did when you first believed?
- Pray:** Ask God to help you to always strive to honor Him especially as Christ's return nears.
- Do:** Write down how you can effectively obey Peter's instructions and look for opportunities to do so this week.

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*1 Peter 4:7b-9*

In 236 A.D. a church leader by the name of Hippolytus predicted that Christ was returning to earth when the calendar reached the new century mark of 500 A.D.

In 336 A.D. another church leader amended that date and said that Christ was coming when the calendar turned to 400 A.D.

There was tremendous disappointment and disillusionment when neither date turned out to be a true prediction.

Fifteen years into the Reformation that was sweeping Germany, a pastor predicted that Christ would return at 8:00 am on October 19, 1533. His prediction ended up causing quite a news item because Martin Luther, the renowned reformer, refused to agree with him. In spite of the division, a large crowd gathered with this pastor early that morning. As 8:00 am came and went, he was eventually left standing there alone.

Centuries later, yet another group of believers predicted the Lord's return for His church on a specific day in 1902. It was during a winter month and they all lived in the same village in Canada. But to prove their undeniable faith, and since the rapture meant they'd be leaving everything, including their clothing behind, they stripped down and waited for the Lord, out there in the Canadian winter, completely naked. The article read, there wasn't any sightings of the Lord, but there were several cases of frostbite. You just can't make this up!

I mentioned in our previous study that the predictions of believers, among other things, only heightens the mockery of the unbelieving world.

But this doesn't just cause unbelievers to mock the gospel; it dilutes the warning of the reality of coming judgment and harms the credibility of the Christian.

When 2011 came and went, here's what the Central North Carolina Atheists and Humanists had to say – "Though the absurdity of this [prediction] is obvious to the majority of the world, this is a great opportunity to highlight these bizarre beliefs and raise awareness of the need for reason."

Let me give you at least three cautions to guide your thinking and, Lord willing, to protect us from discrediting the gospel or diluting the warning of scripture as we live our faith in Christ and long for and look for the blessed hope which is, Paul wrote, *the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus* (Titus 2:13):

Caution #1:

### **1. Scripture provides no prediction of a day or year or century for any future event.**

Why not? Because Peter believed him when the Lord said, *Concerning that day and hour no one knows. (Matthew 24:36)*

The prediction of any hour, day, week, month, year, century, or millennium is misguided and, in fact, disobedient.

### **2. There is no sign to be fulfilled before the church can be raptured.**

All of the books at the bookstores today about signs of earthquakes and blood moons and famines and disasters – those are things that will be fulfilled during the Tribulation period. The natural disasters we hear about every day are not nearly as global as the disasters during the tribulation, described by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation.

Since the creation of the church, described in the Book of Acts, to this day, 1900 years later,

there was nothing in the way of Christ's return for His Bride.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians in his second letter who'd thought because they were experiencing persecution from the Roman Empire that they had somehow missed the rapture and were in the Tribulation.

Paul told them that the tribulation will be a time of great apostasy and the deception by the Antichrist – as well as the judgment of Christ – that Day of the Lord, prophesied in scripture which will pour out great wrath from God upon the earth (*2 Thessalonians 2:1-5*).

Since none of that had happened, Paul reassured the Thessalonians that they certainly hadn't missed the rapture.

What the Apostles do talk about is the imminent return of Christ – that is, it could happen at any moment.

In our last session, we studied both phases of His second coming:

Phase 1 – His coming in the clouds *for* the redeemed (*1 Thessalonians 4*) – and

Phase 2 – His coming to earth/Jerusalem *with* the redeemed (*Revelation 19*)

And here's the unmistakable perspective on the early church: the Apostles continued to talk about the return of Christ coming at any moment.

Now they would never have imagined that 1900 years would have gone by. Just listen to them as they wrote their letters to churches and believers in the first century:

The Apostle James wrote, *Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord . . . for the coming of the Lord is at hand.* (*James 5:7-8*)

John the Apostle wrote, *Little children, it is the last hour.* (*1 John 2:18*)

Paul wrote that *we who are alive and remain will be caught up (rapturo) to meet the Lord in the air.* (*1 Thessalonians 4:17*)

Here's the third caution to consider in light of all the predictions and forecasting you find in the average bookstore today:

### 3. We are not approaching the last days, we are living in them.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote, *In these last days, He has spoken to us through His Son.* (*Hebrews 1:2*)

Paul wrote to Timothy a description of the culture in which he would pastor and interestingly referred to them this way: *In the last days, difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self . . .*

(*2 Timothy 3:1*)

Do you think that this is just now beginning to happen – that men will become lovers of themselves?

No, this was happening in the first century – in fact, since the fall of mankind.

According to the New Testament, you and I happen to be living in the last days. *These* are the last days. The era – the dispensation – of the church happens to be called in scripture, *the last days*.

And we're still here in these last days waiting for Jesus, just like the Apostle Paul did and the Apostle John did and James and Peter did – Jesus is coming for the church; He's just around the corner.

Listen to Paul writing to the believers living in Rome. *You know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for the coming of the Lord is nearer now than when we first believed.* (*Romans 13:11-12 – TLB*)

James the Apostle wrote, *Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.* (*James 5:8*)

Jesus hasn't come again yet, the rapture of the church hasn't happened yet, so what do we do now? How do we prepare for the end of the church age?

That's exactly what Peter tells us next in his letter next; if you're not there already, turn to *1 Peter 4 and verse 7*.

*The end of all things is near, therefore . . .* (*1 Peter 4:7*)

In other words, the next event on the prophetic calendar is indeed the rapture of the

church. Peter writes, it is near – that is, it is imminent.

The Apostle Peter is going to turn us all into sanctified preppers – believers who are living in the last days, awaiting the rapture of the church.

And we'll cover 5 ways to respond to that news – five things to put into practice as the end draws near.

### **Five Practices for End Times Preppers**

And I think it's kind of funny that this one is the first one Peter mentions –

#### **1. Remain calm.**

Peter writes – *Therefore, be of sound judgment*

The word is a Greek verb which describes someone with a cool head and a balanced mind.<sup>i</sup>

This describes someone exercising self-control; in other words, you're not panicking!

One commentator wrote that this word has in mind, "A measure of control over one's thinking and actions that allows a balanced outlook on any situation. When everything is coming unglued, you remain levelheaded, dependent on the Holy Spirit which makes perseverance in life and ministry possible."<sup>ii</sup>

Remain calm because He is in control.

#### **2. Stay focused.**

Peter goes on to write, *Therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit*. To be sober means to be on the alert – to be spiritually observant.<sup>iii</sup> Don't be asleep at the wheel, so to speak.

The word carries the connotation of being sober, which is the opposite of being drunk – because when someone is drunk they are not in full control of their faculties and feelings.<sup>iv</sup>

They are not discerning; they really don't know where they are. And they certainly can't walk in a straight line – physically or spiritually.

Their thoughts are befuddled and mixed up and they can't focus on life; that's the idea behind the word here.

But *you* need to know how to walk and where – *you* need to be able to think straight and true and clear.

So Peter is using verbs that literally and metaphorically mean to stay sharp. Don't panic; think life through from God's perspective. Stay alert; remain calm and stay focused.

One author put it this way:

"Having sound judgment and a sober spirit means when natural disaster hits, you don't panic; or when an official gets elected you don't like, or the nightly news seems packed with bad news. Don't worry. Don't jump off a tall building either. This also means you don't quit your job because Jesus might come back today. You keep your nose to the grindstone and continue your work and life with an ongoing sense of purpose in light of the unknown hour of Christ's coming."<sup>v</sup>

What Peter offers next is the secret to maintaining this kind of balance and calmness and reasonableness and discernment.<sup>vi</sup>

#### **3. Keep praying.**

*Therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*

- Things are going to potentially alarm you. Peter says to pack in your survival kit the element and the habit and the practice of prayer.
- Current events might confuse you – pray.
- The world looks like it's spinning out of control – pray.

Several times in the New Testament the believer is given the dual command to watch and pray (*Matthew 26:41, Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2*).

And here Peter rehearses a lesson he learned the hard way, right?

Do you think he ever forgot the Lord's personal invitation to join Him and pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane?

What Jesus Christ was attempting to teach Peter was that when challenges or surprises or temptations come your way, praying prepares you for the battle.

You are not to pray when temptation comes, you are to pray because temptation will come. Don't enter it unprepared.

The end is near, Peter writes, so pray! And for Peter, the memory of that Garden experience, which led him to the courtyard where the Lord had been taken and interrogated, the memory of all of that leads him now to listen, the lack of spiritual communion simply sets the stage for spiritual collapse.

I remember once when my sons were 5 years old we were praying one morning at the breakfast table before heading off to school and we were taking turns praying. It was one of my son's turn to pray that morning and he announced rather matter of factly, "I'm not going to pray." I thought, "I've got an apostate at the breakfast table and he's only 5 years old! I remained as calm as I could and I asked him, "Well son, why aren't you going to pray?" And he said nonchalantly, "Cause I don't need to."

It struck me later that my 5-year-old son merely stated what we live; we wouldn't say it at the breakfast table, but we don't need to pray – things are good. We wouldn't dare say it, but we can sure live it!

Peter remembers that moment when he didn't really think he needed more prayer. What he thought he needed was more sleep.

You see, while Peter should have been praying with the Lord in the garden, about to enter one of the greatest tests of faith, he didn't think he really needed it.

You see, Peter didn't collapse spiritually in the courtyard. He collapsed in the garden. Before he ever entered that courtyard, Peter was set up to fall down.

Is it any surprise here that Peter, an older man – an older, wiser disciple – a man who would write, not as one who had mastered prayer – he's not telling us that – or that he never misses his prayer time; no, he's writing as

a man who never forgot how he missed one of the most important prayer times in his life.

Is it any wonder that Peter would essentially write to every believer, *Listen . . . as you prepare to live in these last days – remember, the end is near – keep praying!* He should know. Beloved, so should we!

Kenneth Wuest translated this phrase, ***Be calm and collected in spirit with a view to giving yourself to prayer.***<sup>vii</sup>

Keep in mind that Peter isn't suggesting 5 minutes or 15 or even an hour of prayer; he's referring to a lifestyle of a sanctified prepper – practicing the end-times discipline of a mind and heart continually communing with the Lord. It's what Paul referred to as, ***Praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)***

There may be dedicated times for it – and there should be – but prayer is a conversation with the Lord that begins when you wake up in the morning and ends just before you fall asleep at night. The conversation is interrupted, but it doesn't end.

I read recently a wonderful illustration of this kind of praying. It recorded a behind-the-scenes event in 1982 when the *Today Show* in New York City was going to interview Billy Graham – which tells you how much the *Today Show* has changed. When he arrived at the New York studio, one of the program's assistants informed Billy Graham's assistant that a private room had been set aside for the reverend for prayer before the broadcast. The assistant thanked the producer for the thoughtful gesture, but then told him that Mr. Graham would not need the room. The *Today Show* staff were a bit shocked that the world-famous Christian leader wouldn't want to pray a bit before being interviewed on live national television. Graham's assistant further responded kindly, "Mr. Graham started praying when he got up this morning; he prayed while eating his breakfast; he prayed on the way over here in the car and he'll probably be praying all the way through the interview."<sup>viii</sup>

You see, you remain calm and you stay focused because you keep praying.

Peter adds another practice of end-times sanctified preppers – here it is – number 4:

#### 4. Continue loving.

Notice *1 Peter 4* and now *verse 8*.

*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)*

Now Peter focuses on how we are to treat each other as we await the coming of the Lord. This is life in the body of Christ.

And notice how Peter begins *verse 8*, with the phrase, *Above all* – that is, of highest importance. In other words, of everything you do and think and act and serve, first and foremost is this practice – that you *love one another fervently*, or you could translate it, *deeply*.

The word *fervently* or *deeply* was used in the Greek world to describe a horse at full gallop, with taut muscles and sustained effort as he raced along.<sup>ix</sup>

In other words, put every effort you can into showing love toward the body of Christ.

By the way, the original construction here makes everything that we do in *verses 8-11* dependent on – or flow out of – *verse 7*.

In other words, if you're not remaining calm and staying focused and committing to praying, you're never going to love anybody in the church, open your home to anybody in need, or serve anybody effectively.

But if you're prepping correctly for the end of the world, this will become your practice. You will love the body of believers around you.

And one of the necessities of genuine love is described here. Peter writes, *because love covers a multitude of sins*. How great is that!

You want to talk about loving one another in the body? Well, part of loving one another is covering a multitude of sins you see in others.

Now don't misunderstand: Not from Peter, nor anywhere in the life of the New Testament church, are we told as Christians to condone sin

or to ignore sin or to not discipline unrepentant sinners.<sup>x</sup>

What Peter is referring to here is an attitude of grace. In fact, nearly every commentator I read pointed out the Septuagint passage – the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament – from which Peter drew this phrase.

It's found in *Proverbs 10:12: Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers all transgressions*.

The contrasting phrase helps us understand the context of what Peter is applying to the believer.

What Peter is wanting us to demonstrate – as we wait for the coming of Christ – is a gracious spirit that avoids pettiness or pickiness. Avoid that activity of gossip that loves to broadcast the sins and shortcomings of others in the body. Peter wants us to avoid a hateful spirit that loves to point out the faults of others in order to stir up trouble.

To put it in our vernacular, the world out there is a dog eat dog world; let's not bring that spirit in here.

So Peter commands us to love fervently. In other words, keep your love at full strength.

One author wrote, "The faucet of love should never be turned off . . . let it flow deeply and fervently toward one another."<sup>xi</sup>

Keep the faucet turned on and flowing through our lives toward one another.

Let me mention one more practice for our study today; number 5:

#### 5. Be available.

Notice *verse 9* where Peter writes; *Be hospitable to one another without complaint*.

There is the activity and there is the spirit – without complaint or reservation.

In the first century, hospitality was a practical necessity. There were a few inns – but most of them doubled as brothels. Inns were unsafe and undesirable.

And as persecution mounted against the Christians, believers were being ostracized and even thrown out of their homes.<sup>xii</sup>

Keep in mind that for the first 200 years there were no separate church buildings.<sup>xiii</sup>

Each local congregation met in the home of one of the wealthier members – whoever had the largest inner courtyard or accommodations would have been preferable.

In **Romans 16:5** and **1 Corinthians 16:19**, Paul commended people who hosted churches in their homes.

Now the fact that Peter here commands hospitality lets us in on the fact that it wasn't any easier in the first century than it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not everyone volunteered automatically.

Hospitality can be inconvenient;

- it can be costly;
- it takes time;
- it might drain resources, or the people you host might not be grateful, or kind, or neat and clean, or say thank you!

It might be a surprise need and you weren't really ready for it.

It might even go on longer than you expected. In fact, you might be taken advantage of – and innocently at that.

I can remember when Marsha and I had been married for just a few months and we were just setting up our apartment as I entered seminary full time and she worked to put us through.

We were at church one Sunday night and sitting near us was a missionary couple visiting town. I recognized them from my hometown. After church we went over to them after church and I introduced my bride. We chatted a bit and then I said, "Where are you guys eating supper tonight?" They said, "We don't have plans." I said, "Great! Come on over to our apartment for supper!"

On the way home, Marsha said, "Honey, I'm glad you asked them over, but you evidently

don't know that I haven't gotten any groceries yet because payday is next week." She went on to tell me that all we had in the refrigerator was a head of lettuce and a tomato and some salad dressing. Enough for us, but barely enough for four people. Man, I didn't even think of asking her if we had any food.

Still, you'd never know the crisis at hand; Marsha whipped up a great salad and we sat at our little kitchen table eating and talking. Somewhere near the end of our meal, I asked them, "So, where are you guys staying tonight?" They said, "We don't have any plans." I said, "Great! Why don't you stay here?" They said, "That'll be perfect."

We had a one bedroom apartment. My wife graciously gave them our bedroom, changed the sheets, set everything up for them, and we slept on a pallet on the floor in the living room. Actually, I slept in the doghouse.

The trouble was, we got up the next morning and I left for school and Marsha went to work, but they stayed in bed. And when we came home that night, they were *still* there!

Evidently, they weren't planning on leaving. And we had already eaten all the lettuce!

Someone said that hospitality is making people feel at home, when you really wish they were.<sup>xiv</sup>

We would find out later that this couple just sort of floated around from place to place without any purpose or plan. And we had naively become next on the list. We laugh about that now – after years of counseling.

The end is near, Peter writes, so do we hide away from the world? Do we leave the church? Do we head for the hills?

No. Don't panic – stay focused, keep praying, continue graciously loving others and stay involved and available to those in need.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 01/14/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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