

Fact Sheet for **“Serving One Another”**
1 Peter 4:7-11

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ESV 1 Peter 4:7 ¶ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

“The end of all things is at hand” – (See also Philippians 4:5; James 5:8; Revelation 1:3; 22:10) – In Peter’s day they expected the coming of the Lord and the end of all things to be imminent, to happen at any time. We expect exactly the same today. But only God knows when He will bring everything to an end (Matthew 24:36).

“self-controlled” – KJV – sober, NASB – of sound judgment, NIV – alert, NKJV – serious, NLT – earnest – Which translation is right? They all in a sense are. This word, in the original language, literally means “of sound mind”. Peter encouraged them, and us, to use our minds in choosing how to live every day. There is a very small word in the original that is not translated in several versions. If you know the original language this is not strange for all English translations to do on occasion. The KJV translates this as the first word of the verse... “But”. That first word connects this passage with the previous verses (4:5-6). We *may* be judged by the world now, but we will *certainly* give an account of ourselves to God later.

“sober-minded” – The thought is “clear-headed”

“for the sake of your prayers” – literally “unto prayer”

Here is the upshot of this verse. Christians are not to give way to an emotional frenzy concerning the end of the world or the things we will experience at the hand of others in this world, but we are to live this life with a sound mind and we are to be dedicated to prayer.

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

Don’t miss “above all”. Do you wish you knew God’s will for your life? This is part of it. We are to love one another earnestly. That can be challenging at times, and Christians are not immune from buckling under that challenge. What does it mean that love covers a multitude of sins (a rough quote from Proverbs 10:12)? Love does not mean that we are blind to sin in others but does temper our reaction to their sin. If we are to be sound-minded we cannot dismiss sin, in ourselves or others. But if we convince ourselves that we truly are loving others “in principle” while we continue to actively nurse anger and irritation towards them, then we are deceiving ourselves and it is we ourselves who are sinning. This can be a hard pill to take. But remember, there is a difference between sorrow and anger. We can be truly sorrowful about another’s sin without nursing anger toward them because of it. That way we can stand for righteousness, pray for them, and do our best to help them.

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

This verse shows the difficulty at times in being hospitable.

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ^{11a} 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.

This is the shortest of five major passages in the Bible on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:4-16; Exodus 31:1-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11a). Here are some observations...

1. Each believer has received at least one spiritual gift, and we are to use those gifts to serve one another. Think about what happens weekly at this church and how many people are involved. If you are not using your gifting to serve one another, then why aren't you? You say you don't know what your spiritual gift is? Then consider the next observation.

2. No two of these lists are the same. This gives the strong hint that all the spiritual gifts are not mentioned in the Bible. That also means that you don't need to identify your spiritual gift before you can use it. You just need to be active in ministry. God will get you to where He wants you to be. Consider counseling or music to suggest two that could be spiritual gifts. If you can't carry a tune in a tin bucket, then your gift is not singing. If you have limited financial resources, then your gift is not giving. If you can't fathom why everyone doesn't have multiple commentary sets, then your gift may be teaching. If you look for every opportunity to share the Gospel, then your gift may be evangelism. Now be careful. We all need to be active in each of these areas, but some Christians are gifted by God with a special ability in these areas. And you will be drawn to be active in your area of gifting.

3. None of the lists details the gifts. We know the gifts primarily by their titles. We can garner a few details from Scripture about a couple of the gifts, but that is all. This is one of the major flaws in spiritual gift inventories. This also creates problems when someone we respect urges us to adopt and define a gift by our feelings rather than by Scripture.

4. Our gifts are to glorify the Lord, not ourselves. A proper exercise of spiritual gifts results in service to other believers and bringing glory to Christ, not ourselves. For instance, my main concern when I step into this pulpit is not to build myself up but to be faithful to God's Word. My second concern is to serve well everyone who is listening in regard to their spiritual walk.

The upshot of 1 Peter 4:10-11a is that as each of us has received a spiritual gift we are to use that gift to build-up the church and glorify Christ. Peter then ends with a short benediction.

^{11b} To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter gave several exhortations that would help his readers to have good relationships with one another. What was true in Peter's day is still true 2,000 years later. This is what God has called us to. Remember Jesus' last words to His disciples (John 13:35).