

## “Following Jesus – For Real (Part 1)”

### 1 Peter 2: 11-17

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of the foolish. 16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. 17 Show proper respect to everyone, love your fellow believers, fear God, honor the emperor. (NIV)

NLT 11 Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. 12 Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when He judges the world.

13 For the Lord’s sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, 14 or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

15 It is God’s will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. 16 For you are free, yet you are God’s slaves, so don’t use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. 17 Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.

I submit to you this morning that this second part of 1 Peter chapter 2 is about your lifestyle. Peter is telling us here, what it means, what it looks like, to follow Jesus. I have to be honest with you and tell you that in my original preaching plan which I came up with way back in December of 2022, I had planned to skip this passage. You see the “Lectionary” which selects 3-4 passages for every Sunday as a guide for Pastors skips this passage. Then a week ago last Friday Jamie was at church helping us to try to get the internet working at church again. At one point we couldn’t even get the office computer or my laptop to talk to the copy machine and print anything. Anyways, Jamie and I were talking afterward about how difficult passages in the Bible get skipped. And as I started preparing this week, God used that conversation, to tell me that He didn’t want me to skip this passage. So I am preaching on verses 11-17. I finished with verse ten last week. It occurs to me that in basic and general churchianity in the United States that we give a lot of lip service to following Jesus, but as a whole, we don’t really know what that means. At the very least, following Jesus, means that we read the gospels and

follow the example that we find there. At Doster Community Church it is in our mission and in our statement of faith that we take the Word of God very seriously and that we want to live by it. I believe that 1 Peter 2:11-17 is a description of what a “following Jesus-lifestyle” looks like. How do we live like Jesus did some 2,000 years ago in 2023, in the United States, in Michigan, in the Doster community? Peter gives us some guidelines to follow. What Peter wrote to Gentile Christians many centuries ago is relevant today. **[NOTE 1]**

The first thing Peter writes in verse 11 is: “Dear friends, I urge you strongly, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. The Greek and other translations help us out here. Another way to say it is we need to renounce our natural impulses, the ones that are physical in motivation and intent; impulses that are centered on material wealth and self-preservation. Oh yeah!... those impulses. The ones that are so hard to ignore. Fleshly desires are powerful enemies. They use the body and make a person’s ego feel self-sufficient. Sometimes our fleshly desires seek to control us. But Jesus has won the decisive victory over Satan on the cross. He has promised us that we will not be tempted beyond what we can bare and that He will provide a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). When we ask Jesus Christ to be the Lord of our life we become new creatures. But that doesn’t mean that we are no longer tempted. The old Adam, our body, still wants things that are wrong and we will be tempted. We need to continually keep away from our sinful desires. Joseph taught us by his actions in Genesis that sometimes we simply need to run the other way. When Potipher’s wife grabbed him by his cloak during her seduction he left his clothes right there in her hands and ran away. Sometimes the “way out” that God provides is a chance to run away, shut down the computer, put the phone on the charger, go for a walk, or just get the blank out of wherever you are that is tempting you. **[NOTE 2]**

Peter believed that the best witness for Christianity was a well-lived Christian life. Non-Christians will benefit from seeing the honorable, respectable, patient, joyful and loyal manner of life you display. And you know Peter was right! Have you ever noticed how many times you get the same answer when you ask people why they don’t go to church anymore? The answer is rarely anything to do with theology. The answer most often has to do with a name, a person, a pastor who did something that turned them off, made them mad, or impacted them or their lives in some negative way.

I have mentioned in previous sermons my maternal grandfather. My grandpa never went to church because of the hypocrisy he saw in the church people. He thought that people were going to church because they thought they were better than everyone else. Nobody ever told my maternal grandpa that people were going to church because they knew they were NOT perfect and needed forgiveness. That includes a home visit by a local pastor after which my grandfather declared he would never set foot in a church, ever! If some humble, honorable, patient, joyful person would have kindly explained to my grandpa that people were going to church to be forgiven, that Christianity was about a relationship with Jesus, he might have become a Christian. But nobody did! Nobody lived out the Christian life in front of him and no-one ever told

him that Christians went to church to confess their sins and be reassured by 1 John 1:9 that they were forgiven.[NOTE 3]

Believe me, people are watching you if you claim to be a Christian. If a Pastor does something questionable, you would be surprised at the number of people who know about it very quickly. Your friends, the neighbors, they are watching, to see what difference knowing Jesus makes in your life. Does it make a difference? Does your life look any different? You would be surprised how many people would answer that question about you. Once commentary author wrote, "It is vitally important for the Christian to do right and live well. In this way they shut up the fools and the ignorant." Verse 12 reads, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us." We are called to live a disciplined life among the unbelievers. This passage seems to emphasize deeds and how we act. Paul, in most of his letters emphasized faith. But if you think about who Paul was and his background it makes sense. Paul was a Pharisee who was all about rules and acting within parameters so he would naturally emphasize the faith side. Peter, who was impulsive and emotional could appreciate how important it was to show one's faith by your deeds and James wrote the same way. That tells me that both faith and deeds are important. The truth is, that faith validates itself in action to the point where faith and action are virtually indistinguishable. Either one, faith or deeds, is worthless without the other. The Greek word for good, means morally beautiful. A devoted follower of Jesus that has both faith, and the deeds to back that faith up is beautiful.

Now let's look at Verse 15. "For it is God's will that by doing good, you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. God's way to silence foolish, ignorant people is to actively do good; to be morally beautiful. Our lives must point others toward Jesus Christ! We are to be like a lighthouse. A lighthouse doesn't ring bells, or shoot cannons, it just shines. One of my favorite sayings is, "If we try, we fail but if we trust ... God succeeds. If we follow Jesus as the Lord of our lives, He will show us the way. And He has given us the Holy Spirit to help us along. Jesus gave us a perfect example of how to live, what our lifestyle should look like. That's why it is very important to be reading the gospels. [NOTE 4]

Now I want to jump outside of the verses that I read in the beginning. I want to take a look at verses 22 and 23 of 1 Peter chapter 2. It reads, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him He did not retaliate. When He suffered He made no threats. Instead He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. By His wounds we are healed. God was the one in whom Jesus put His trust, as you and I must now' and God will not disappoint such trust. Peter is holding up Jesus for us as the ultimate example to follow. Jesus was fully set apart for God, He was Holy. There was no deceit in His mouth. That reminds us how important it is to tell the truth, to avoid lying. It is important for us to leave paybacks for insults, sufferings, pain and injustice to God. [NOTE 5]

But there is more. Look back at our Scripture passage for today! In verses 13 and 14 we read, “Submit yourselves for the Lords sake, to every authority instituted among men.” Peter’s view is that all people are creatures of God and deserve respect; even Barack Obama and Joe Biden. But notice Peter doesn’t say we should submit to every authority instituted my humans because they deserve it. Peter calls us to submit to authorities for the “Lord’s sake”! Do it because you recognize the worth of every person. For the Lords’ sake we are to honor the state, the government and their authority. Peter doesn’t say it’s easy. Just do it. I know this isn’t a popular verse right now, especially among some of you whom I know are extremely disappointed with our country’s leadership. That is one reason why I was going to just skip these verses. Through my conversation with Jamie, God told me that I shouldn’t do that. So I am doing my best to listen and obey. But let me be clear, Peter does not mean to suggest that we are to submit blindly and do anything our government authorities say. Paul and Silas demonstrate to us that when it comes to anything **“outside of God’s Will”**, that we do not even listen to church authorities. So, we are not being asked to do anything against the faith, against what the Bible teaches; we are Christians in our loyalty first, and we submit to the authorities set up by humans second! But it does say it, “Submit yourselves for the Lords sake, to every authority instituted among men.” [NOTE 6]

Now we come to verses 16 and 17. Verse 16 reminds us that we are to live like we are free from the powers of sin and free to follow Christ responsibly. As Christians we need to show we have a freedom that is responsible, a freedom that issues in righteousness and justice. As new creatures in Christ when we ask Jesus into our lives we are free from the bondage of sin. I think that is what makes Christianity hard to understand sometimes. Everything seems backwards from how it feels like it should be or maybe I should say, backwards from the way the world thinks it should be. I mean, if you want to be first in God’s kingdom, you must be a servant, or last. If you want to gain eternal life you must lose your earthly life to Christ ... you see, everything seems backwards. That’s why we read elsewhere in the Bible that God’s wisdom is foolishness to the world. [NOTE 7]

Then we conclude with verse 17: “Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.” Again the Greek helps to clarify things. In the Greek we see that the same word is used in the beginning of the verse in respect to everyone as the word used in conjunction with the king or emperor at the end of the verse. In other words we are to respect, or honor, all people, including the emperor or king. This was necessary for Peter to say because the emperor at the time Peter was writing this was Nero, who was famous for his persecution of Christians. But the gist of it is that we are to honor all people. Then he says we are to Love the “brotherhood of believers”. Peter affirms Jesus’ words “love your enemies” but carefully distinguishes love from respect. We are to show LOVE for one another and respect to all. As Jesus said to the disciples in the gospel of John chapter 13 and verse 35 “All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” So this is also a witness to the unbelievers and another one of the things Peter wants us to make a part

of our lifestyle. This is the main thing that should be different about our lives. Our lifestyle should demonstrate a love for one another that is deeper and stronger than with other relationships. We should demonstrate a respect for all people, caring for other people as fellow creations of God.

Finally, we need to fear God. What does it mean to fear God. To “fear” God to me, means to be in awe of His presence, to have the highest respect, to bow in awe, to revere and worship Him! Make time to affirm His worth. The mark of a Christian is that he/she loves and honors even those who abuse and persecute them, and they have a healthy respect and awe for their God. Live like you serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Creator of the universe. Strive to live like you are a child of the King.

If we take nothing else away from this place today, may it be an understanding that our lifestyle should be humble and yet as much like Jesus’ as possible. Jesus’ lifestyle was humble! God cares about our lifestyle. He cares what you do Monday through Saturday because He knows all the people that are watching you to see if a personal relationship with Jesus makes a difference. Jesus knows that what you do effects more than just you and your family. How we live our lives, our lifestyle if you will, can make a difference. You (and how you live your life) may be the only Jesus, some people ever see. So, what are you going to do about it? Please write down on your bulletin and then take the bulletin with you when you leave, write down what specific things you can do this week to move your lifestyle just two degrees toward being more like Jesus and His example. Let’s pray ... AMEN

**Sermon Notes for “Lifestyles of the Humble and Famous”**  
**Based on 1 Peter 2: 11-17 given at Voice of Hope Church**  
**September 27, 2015, and then August 30, 2023**

- I. We are called to renounce our natural selfish impulses. We will be tempted but when we are tempted, we are promised that we will not be tempted beyond what we can bare and God will provide a way out.
- II. Our best witness is a life lived for Christ. When we display the fruits of the Holy Spirit we are living in a way that gives others a reason to listen to our testimony.
- III. One modern translation has Verse 12, “It is vitally important for the Christian to do right and behave well. In this way they shut up the fools and the ignorant.”
- IV. Jesus’ example to us is emphasized in verse 22 and 23, “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him He did not retaliate. When He suffered He made no threats. Instead He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. ... By His wounds we are healed.
- V. We are to submit ourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men. But where they are contrary to the Bible we must take a stand and live Jesus’ way above all.
- VI. Live like you are free from the powers of sin and free to follow Christ. Realize the privilege of becoming a slave to Christ.
- VII. We are to show love for one another and respect to all. We are called to have a healthy respect and awe for our Creator, Lord, and Savior: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What are you going to do about it?