

Canceled
A Roadmap for Living In Exile
I Will! 3 Resolutions Every Christian Should Always Be Achieving In Their Local Church
1 Peter 4:8-11

Introduction: It's ironic that on January 1 we land on this passage. Its literally how the chips fell with where we would be in our study of 1st Peter. Everybody in the world is making "New Year's Resolutions" today. Whether you said it out loud or just thought about it in the back of your mind, my guess is everybody has at least been working out in their mind what they are going to do different this year – AKA a resolution!

So today we land on a passage that clarifies 3 resolutions every Christian should constantly be striving for; that is, three resolutions we shouldn't wait for New Year's Day to determine we are going to do them, but rather, live them out every day! These are things we should all say – I WILL! These are things we should all say, no matter what happens in my life, no matter how people treat me, no matter how people respond to me – I. WILL!

Let me read this passage to you then we are going to dive right in.

8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 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. (1 Peter 4:8-11)

Proposition: 1 Peter 4:8-11 clarifies 3 resolutions every Christian should always be achieving in their local church.

The 1st resolution I need to always be achieving in my local church is that ...

(1) I will love people in my local church the way Jesus does. (4:8)

A. "8 Above all"

1. Now before we get too far into this verse, I want to make sure you understand the impact of the very first phrase in verse 8 - "**Above all.**"
2. It is a comparative phrase. It means, everything I just said is important, but what I'm about to say is even more important.
3. For instance, one of my favorite positions to coach in football is Defensive Backs – particularly Free Safeties and Corners. When it comes to teaching them how to play a 3 deep zone, you teach the two Corners and the Free

Safety all kinds of really important things that are essential for it to work, but it always ends with, “above all, if you forget everything, don’t let anybody get behind you!” It doesn’t reduce the importance of any of the other things like, disguising the coverage prior to the snap; correct technique in your back pedal; play your zone, not a receiver; read pass first instead of run; etc. All of those are seriously important keys to winning. However, as important as all of those other things are, if you let somebody get behind you then it doesn’t matter that you did all of those other things!

4. This is exactly what Peter is saying here. He’s just told us all about super important things related to not living in sin, being self-controlled and sober-minded. Those are MASSIVELY important and if we don’t do what Peter told us to do, we will make a mess of our lives. BUT, as vitally important as those things are, what he’s about to say is even more important! This is the “coup de grace of all dares, the sinister triple-dog-dare” from the flagpole scene in the movie “A Christmas Story.”

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

1. **“keep”** implies they are already loving one another earnestly and thus they need to keep doing it. Peter is complementing them and coaching them at the same time. But let’s look a little closer at what he tells them to keep doing.
2. **“Loving one another”**
 - a. “Love is capable of being commanded because it is not primarily an emotion but a decision of the will leading to action.”¹
 - b. This is the “agape” love that if you grew up in church you’ve likely heard about. It’s a love of choice that is not a response to the love a person is receiving, but rather it’s a resolve to love a person regardless of what you receive from them.
 - c. Furthermore, it is a commitment to whatever is necessary to give life to the person you’ve decided to love. It means your priority in the action and spirit of how you love, is the impact it will have on the person you are loving.
 - d. Peter then adds a measure to how we are to give that love. He writes, loving one another...

¹ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*](#) (Vol. 16, pp. 167–168). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

3. “Earnestly”

- a. **“each other deeply.** “Deeply” (*ektenē*, “stretched” or “strained”) was used to describe the taut muscles of an athlete who strains to win a race (cf. *ektenōs* in 1:22). A Christian’s unselfish love and concern for others should be exercised to the point of sacrificially giving for others’ welfare.”²
- b. “The Greek word here translated “fervent” means literally “stretched out.” The idea is that of a love that is extended to reach the one loved. It is the act of one who, instead of living a self-centered life, gives of himself to others. The word means here, “intent, earnest, assiduous.””³

4. Now here is where this really starts looking like Jesus. Peter writes, **“since love covers a multitude of sins.”**

- a. Elsewhere the Bible says, **“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; (Romans 4:7)**
- b. The focus of Romans 4:7 is how Christ covered our sin by paying the debt we owed and, as such, removed our guilt before the Father so that we can justly receive His salvation.
- c. The emphasis of Romans 4:7 is the same as it is in 1 Peter 4:8. To be loved as Jesus loves impacts our relationship with sin! Therefore, Peter is saying to the church, if you will love one another earnestly, the way Christ loves you, you will provide a covering to one another that helps each other find freedom from sin and walk in newness of life.
- d. Peter well knows this covering. When Peter looked back on the three years he and the other disciples traveled around with Jesus, he couldn’t help but see the patience of Christ with their many failures! They got so many things wrong in those three years. The most pronounced testimony of this in Peter’s life was the three times he publicly denied even knowing Jesus! Peter was also called out by Paul in the book of Galatians for his racist actions towards non-Jews (Gentiles) which took place after the Resurrection of Christ and even after Peter had been elevated to a major place of prominence in the mission of Christ!
- e. The point I’m making is that Peter totally understood Christ’s persistence to free us from sin, but He also knew the love of Christ that

² Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 853). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, p. 115). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

is so incredibly patient with us in the process! Peter knew the love of Christ, that when we truly believe it, inspires us to get up from even our worst failures and press on towards the upward call of God (Phil 3:14). Christ never affirms, applauds or excuses sin; however, His love tells us that even though we failed Him, He is still unwavering in His love for us and in His pride of us being known as one of His!

- f. This doesn't mean we shelter people from consequences. God Himself, The Loving Father, chastises those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:6). But rather, for instance, when I failed to execute for a coach that I knew didn't love me, then I was pretty sure I was going to be punished and possibly never get to play again – it always felt like that coach was looking for a way to just get you out of the way. However, when I failed to execute for a coach that I knew loved me, then I knew I was going to get coached on how to be successful; that he was all in not only to win himself, but for me to win, and therefore, even if that coaching included some consequences to help me remember the coaching, I was inspired by it rather than deterred by it!
 - g. So listen, the church should NEVER be a “gotcha” community, but an “I Got You!” community where we are there to give each other life for the fight, not put a heavy foot on one another in a way that hinders them in the fight!
- C. So, putting that all together. Every born again believer should be resolved not only to be a part of a local church, but to love people in that church in a way that fuels them to overcome sin and walk in the glorious righteous life of Christ!

The 2nd resolution I need to always be achieving in my local church is that ...

(2) I will joyfully and consistently invite people from my local church to my home! (4:9)

- A. You can't invite everybody in Venture to your home just as they couldn't do that in many of the places the church existed in Biblical times (i.e. there were 1,000's of believers in Jerusalem on the first day!). However, the early church, especially in the Book of Acts, clearly understood the value of being in each other's homes. Listen to the heart of the church in its formation in Acts 2:36-47. This is not prescriptive, in that Acts 2 is not written to the church as a command, but it is certainly descriptive of the kind of heart and commitment we should have for one another because of our identity in Christ! Here's what happened when it all got started,
 - 1. **36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and**

the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:36-41)

2. The church was now officially rolling. The Holy Spirit had come, Peter had just proclaimed the Gospel, and Jews from all over the world who were there to celebrate Pentecost just got saved. So, what do they do next? Let's keep reading,
 3. **42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:36-47)**
 4. Christians were committed (devoted) to "day by day" gather together to be taught the truth (the apostle's teaching which is given to us as the New Testament in our Bible). Their mass gatherings at that time were in large open areas of the Temple which occupied almost 35 acres. Each day they would gather somewhere on the Temple Mount to hear the Apostles teach them the Scriptures and the Doctrine of the Gospel. They were also committed to "the fellowship," that is, the unique identity they all now shared as followers of Christ. In addition, they were committed to the "breaking of bread" not just in general but "in their homes," which highlights that they were truly treating each other as family! Finally, they were committed to praying for one another and, as we later read in Acts 4:23-21, they prayed for boldness to keep sharing the Gospel with others!
- B. Now what does that have to do with our passage in 1st Peter, well, Peter once again writes something very BLUNT.
- C. **9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.**

1. The Greek word translated “**Hospitality**” is made up of two Greek words.
 - a. “This is a compound term of *phileō* (love) plus *xenos* (stranger).”⁴
 - b. Throughout the Bible the context of the word “hospitality” is often related to the most literal application of the word, that is, to show brotherly love (*phileo*) to strangers. It meant to treat strangers like family by welcoming them in your home and giving them a temporary place to stay while they travel. D. R. Helm noted,

Note: “Generally speaking there weren’t hotels or motels in which to stay. A traveler would head to the town center in hopes of being invited home by a kind and gracious resident.” (D.R. Helm)⁵
 - c. Now there is no doubt this is how the word is mostly used in the Bible, however, to my surprise, almost all of the commentators I read seemed to totally ignore that Peter is specifically applying the word here to “one another.” The *xenos*/stranger here is not a person you have no knowledge of, but rather a person in your local church that’s not a resident of your home. Therefore, in this specific verse Peter is instructing us to invite people from our local church into our home and treat them like family!
 - d. From a great commission standpoint, we should be inviting people who are far from God into our homes as well, so don’t let that get lost here, but in this passage, Peter is specifically concerned about the health of the local church. The church is a family and must treat one another that way.
2. Furthermore, I find it interesting that Peter had to tell the people in these churches to do it “**without grumbling.**”
 - a. You would expect people to be hesitant about inviting a total stranger in their home, but why would they be grumbling about inviting people from their own local church into their home? I can only imagine what the things were the people Peter was writing to might grumble about. The churches were growing with people from different cultures, Jews and Gentiles were particularly at odds in their cultural practices, and then, of course, you had the significant cultural differences between those who had money and power and those who didn’t. Everywhere there was a cultural variation there was potential for conflict, distain, or offense.

⁴ Uteley, R. J. D. (2000). [*The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*](#) (Vol. Volume 2, p. 256). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

⁵ Helm, D. R. (2008). [*1 & 2 Peter and Jude: sharing christ’s sufferings*](#) (p. 141). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

- b.** In addition, whenever you have somebody in your home it's a sacrifice of your time and money to host them. If they hadn't have come over, you would have had that time and money to spend elsewhere. Most people in the first century had very little resources to live off of anyway, therefore it was a HUGE sacrifice to invite people into your home, especially those who had plenty to live off of already! But Peter makes no exceptions. He tells them to do it. Period. This is a very straight forward and blunt command!
 - c.** Interestingly, in our context, with all the talk in the southeastern United States about preserving southern traditions and heritage, its rather ironic that "southern hospitality" is becoming more and more faint. People don't invite people into their homes anymore. When I was in Seminary I used to go to churches and preach on the weekends. As a part of my service to that local church, I would go door to door in the neighborhoods to meet people, talk about Jesus and invite them to that church. Most of the time, if I was anywhere in the south, I knew that at least one person was going to invite me in their home and offer me something to eat and drink. However, I was also fairly certain that when I was going up north, I was likely not going to be invited into a home – ever! I remember one time I was in Westerville, Ohio knocking on doors for a church I was preaching at that weekend. It was something like 15 degrees Fahrenheit outside, the wind was blowing, and it was snowing. I thought, I'm going door knocking because as bad as this weather is, surely somebody will invite me into their home for some Hot Chocolate, which will almost certainly open the door for a great conversation about Jesus. To my disappointment, and the detriment of my health, most people barely cracked the door when they talked to me, and nobody invited me in their home! Me and the Liberty Students that went with me almost froze to death that day!
 - d.** My point is, down here in North Carolina people love to brag about their southern heritage and the implied southern hospitality that goes with it, however, I've literally started a campaign called "#SaveJonathan'sJob" to try and get people in the church to have other people in the church in their homes! We call it Life Group. It's a way of developing relationships with other people in the local church so that you can encourage each other in life and faith. The local church is literally a "fellowship of believers," that is, a community of people who are living out eternal life in Christ with one another. But sadly, there is very little "one another" in our culture anymore, and even more sadly there is very little "one another" in the local church anymore!
- D.** So here we are in 2023 and many Americans consider themselves to be committed followers of Christ if they gather together with their local church

once or twice a month to hear the teaching of God's Word. The average American Christian doesn't even prioritize sitting under the teaching of the Word, much less prioritize the fellowship of the church.

- E. But Peter is saying, ABOVE everything I've told you guys to do, love one another earnestly and treat each other as family, so much so you demonstrate hospitality with one another; that is, you live life with other people in your local church by gathering in each other's homes and treating each other as family – hospitality!
- F. So, if you're not in a some kind of group in Venture where you are connecting with some people in the church, then pull out your phone, scan the QR code on the back of your bulletin, click the Next Steps button and then click the option in the form that says you want to know more about getting in a Bible Study or Life Group!

The 3rd resolution I need to always be achieving in my local church is that ...

(3) With effort and excellence, I will use my talents, opportunities, and resources to help my local church be a healthy, inviting, and constantly expanding family seeking to know and follow Christ! (4:10-11)

- A. Before I read what Peter wrote on this subject, I want you to know that what Peter highlights here is a major theme in the New Testament. This isn't something random that is just for the churches Peter addressed in this letter, but it is most certainly a vital and consistent teaching for every local church. Let me quickly share some other passages on this subject so you can hear the Biblical priority this carries, then we will dive into what Peter specifically wrote about it.
 - 1. **6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)**
 - 2. **4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)**
 - 3. **11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so**

that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

- B. Capturing many of the same principles Peter wrote,
- C. **10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 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.**
- D. **"10 As each has received a gift"** – meaning you didn't create the talents and abilities you have, God did. Likewise, the resources you have, you may have worked to acquire them but once again it was the Lord that gave you the ability and the opportunity. This is vital to remember because he also says,
- E. **"as good stewards of God's varied grace"** – varied grace refers to the different types and measures of gifts He gives us in the way of talents, opportunities and resources, but does so by placing them in the context of belonging to GOD! Did you catch that? To be a steward is to be a manager of something that belongs to somebody else.
- Note: "A "steward" was one who served as a house manager; he had no wealth of his own but distributed his master's wealth according to his master's will and direction."⁶
- F. You and I are stewards of the various gifts GOD grants us, meaning they still belong to HIM! The talent you were born with, the opportunities that have been put in front of you, and the resources you've both been given and acquired ALL belong to the LORD, and He's trusting you to manage them in a way that reflects HIS purposes and heart. Therefore, Peter writes, **that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**
- G. Let me further emphasize something I just said more clearly. You and I do not glorify God when we use the talents, opportunities and resources He's given us in ways that don't match His purposes and His heart, that is, His character, ethics, desires and plans. This by NO means implies the talents, opportunities

⁶ Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 853–854). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

and resources He's blessed us with are exclusively for the church. Using them to supply for you and your family are most certainly Biblical and most certainly a part of His plan! However, we generally have no problem motivating ourselves to put effort and excellence into using our talents, opportunities and resources into things that financially provide for ourselves, but when it comes to the local church and the cause of Christ, people somehow begin to think oppositely.

H. Therefore, Peter's focus here is not how we use these talents to provide for ourselves and our family in secular society, but rather how we use them to serve Christ's purpose in and through the local church! Look at the passage again, Peter writes,

I. **11 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.**

1. **11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God**

- a. **"The Greek word "oracles" was used in classical Greek of the oracular utterances of heathen deities. In the Christian system it refers to divine utterances or revelations." (K.S. Wuest)⁷**
- b. Do you hear anything casual or light in that? Whether you are teaching a preschool break out session, leading an adult Bible study, or preaching on Sunday; if God has gifted you to teach, then when you open your mouth to do that, then you better do so as one who knows you are responsible for carrying the vary utterances and revelations of God to others! There is no way a person can honestly do that haphazardly. There is no way a person can do anything but poor themselves into the effort of delivering God's Word in the most effective way possible to turn the listeners eyes and heart towards Jesus and the abundant life that is only found and experienced in Him!
- c. He then refers to something even more broad than teaching God's Word. He writes,

2. **whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies**

- a. The word for serve here is not being used to highlight a specific type of talent or ability but rather a focus. To "serve" is a term that necessarily means to give yourself to others in a way that helps them. You use your strength not to benefit yourself but them.

⁷ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 11, p. 116). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- b. So, Peter says, don't serve somebody with the measure of strength you can give them, but rather what God gives! That significantly raises the bar of effort and excellence!!! You are there to serve them out of all that Christ has given you!
- J. In short, Peter says everything we do with the talents, opportunities and resources God gives us should be to this end - **in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**
- K. God is not honored by a halfhearted, lazy effort towards His church and His purposes through His Church! He is not honored when we misappropriate what we have been given to steward. For instance, in the context of the local church,
 1. When it's done for our own enjoyment instead of the health of the body and advancement of the Gospel, our decisions on how and when we use our talents, opportunities and resources are made based on what we personally want from it rather than on what's best for the church.
 2. When we use our talents, opportunities and resources for our glory instead of God's we always end up feeling as if they aren't being used to their fullest capacity.
 3. When we find our identity in our talents, opportunities and resources, rather than in Jesus, we end up in spiritual decay.
 4. When we make excuses for the lack of effort or excellence in our talents, opportunities, and resources it results in taking life and opportunity from the church to grow and expand.

So let me wrap this up. This is a subject I can go on for a long time, but here's the bottom line.

Challenge: Is your testimony within the church "I will", or "I won't"?

I love what Josh Sugg often says, "don't talk about it, be about it."

I'm not saying to go sign up and do everything in the church! As a matter of fact, Charles Spurgeon wrote,

"The way to do a great deal is to keep on doing a little. The way to do nothing at all is to be continually resolving that you will do everything." (Charles Spurgeon)⁸

⁸ Spurgeon, C. (2014). [*Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*](#). (E. Ritzema & J. Strong, Eds.). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

What I'm saying is that the more people there are in Venture who clearly and obviously stretch to love others in the church the way Christ loves us; the more people in Venture who start taking initiative to invite people they don't know in the church into their home so they can develop true family type relationships with them; and the more people in Venture begin to put serious effort and excellence into how they use their talents, opportunities and resources for the work of Christ in and through the Church, well, the more stressed out the leadership is going to happily be trying to figure out how to shepherd all the people running to Jesus through the people of Venture Church!

I believe 2023 could be the most exciting year in the now 100 plus year history of this church! What will make it exciting is not that a lot more people come to our worship gatherings or events, but rather that a lot more people are having their lives radically changed with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I pray Venture church breaks the Baptismal from using it too much! I pray our pastors get worn out, not from ministering to people with spiritual needs, but from spending so much time helping encourage and coach the people of Venture who are ministering to their families, church and community. I pray we run out of room in worship gatherings because people are seeing the life of Jesus so clearly lived out in the people of Venture that they must come see if they can be a part of it as well!

So, I challenge each of you and myself to be I WILL people. I will resolve to do what He has called, commanded and gifted me to do for His church and His mission and do it because HE IS WORTHY!