

This passage is kind of like a code for living. A set of guidelines and principles that we can take into every day life.

Sounds good doesn't it. Funny thing is: Peter had to tell people these things and we still need to hear them 2000 odd years later. Still need to be reminded to be good people.

But let's look at it.

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

Oh this starts with a toughy for Baptists. Be like Minded.

How can a bunch of intelligent people with skills of comprehension and interpretation, with analytical minds all think the same. Arrh, that's not what it says, It says be like minded. It doesn't say be exactly the same minded, but like. It doesn't say agree on everything but like.

An example. I have a number of guitars. They are guitars but they are different, they are still guitars, they are like each other but still individually different, and in fact for different purposes.

- Be careful not to think being unity is thinking the same. Like minded has the essence of going the same direction together.
- Be sympathetic, another tough one for modern Baptists. We assume we are right and others are wrong. Actually in any Baptist church there are those who assume that they know better than others and let you know that. Being sympathetic is about caring for the person in another situation. Even a situation of thinking different.
- What about love one another? Actually I think this church loves well when there is a crisis. I also think like most families there can be an apathy to our love, and it isn't really love anymore.
- What about being compassionate? Hey aren't these all linked up. Yep, being sympathetic and compassionate are a way of loving.
- Then Peter throws in BE HUMBLE. Oh that's a bit pointed. Modern society isn't naturally humble. Mostly we try to get ahead, push ourselves forward, think we have the answers or the right to be noticed. But biblically, we are told to be humble. Now I had a look at the old greek New Testament here. The word this translation translates as Humble is philophon which means courteous and kind. So I suppose what Peter is saying is to have an attitude of courteousness, humility and kindness.

See all of this fits as a model or template for living. We need to work at it, be these things to be the people God calls us to.

Look where Peter takes us next.

⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Here is something practical. Don't react to negativity. Don't react to put downs, don't react to slander, don't react to persecution. Hang on how do you do that?

Don't react. When it happens keep the mouth shut.

That's what he says in the next verse.

¹⁰ For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

Keep quiet. Shut the mouth. Don't react. Don't mimic evil or become evil in reaction to others evil.

This has been wonderfully demonstrated by the Coptic Christians in Egypt. The people keep getting killed and injured so what do they do. Don't complain, but pray for the people who hurt them.

¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

This is a fairly strong command – They must. In other words when people put you down, keep it shut. But react by: Doing good, seeking peace and actually pursuing peace.

At the moments Christians in our media in Australia are being hammered. Criticisms about SRE our attitude to same sex marriage, our belief structure, our lifestyle is all fair game for the media to criticize. What are we to do?

Shut up and get on with the job of helping the poor, caring for the sick, loving the unlovely, basically stick to being christians. It results in being blessed.

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Next Peter asks a weird kind of question.

¹³ Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

There is an answer here we don't like. Anyone who wants to take advantage. Satan wants to harm us, we know that. But the bible is realistic.

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.”

This is a bit weird, but hey it works. Let’s go back to those Coptic Christians. They have been blessed by the world for their response. Not only in the spiritual sense, but by the support physically of people from around the world to rebuild their churches and their lives.

This next bit is about our mission.

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Too often we think mission or evangelism is a program. Here we see it as a lifestyle, and a relationship. Be prepared. IN other words, know your stuff. Know how to tell your story about how Jesus impacts your life. IN fact, be prepare to answer questions indicates that you need to know and understand what people will be talking about. What are the issues?

Can you defend your view of same sex marriage?

Can you defend why you think Scripture should be in schools?

And I don’t just mean you saying that’s what I think and that’s it. I mean having a real biblical answer to the issue.

When the Dan Brown book, the Da Vinci Code came out a lot of people questioned biblical credibility. People started to believe what the fiction story stated as fact. So I read the book.

Great fiction. Because that is what it is. There is no basis of fact but if you didn’t do your investigation you wouldn’t know. I had numerous discussions on the Holy Grail, the blood line of Christ, the greek meaning of the name Sophia, some basic church history and knowing what the New Testament actually says. But if you haven’t read the book, you cant interface with it, if you don’t know what the answers are you can’t answer the questions.

Sorry!!! Sometimes being prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks takes some work!

Actually what Peter gives us from v 18-22 is a basic format for evangelism back in the day it was written.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

¹⁹ After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—

²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus

Christ,
²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Do you have statement of your faith?

Do you have a creed?