

**“Openness to God”**

**1 Peter 4: 7-11**

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**If one is to genuinely desire God’s will, one must be open to God.** We can and do fall into the trap of wanting to pursue our ideas of God and in so doing block ourselves from truly experiencing God as he reveals himself. The Pharisees had this problem. They could not discern the purpose and mission of Jesus because they were blocked by their own preconceived ideas and their attachments. For example, they practice the law in a legalistic way which brought condemnation on those who did not follow the law to the letter. Condemnation is not the will of God

Another example of being blocked by preconceived ideas is at the time of the ascension of Christ, the Disciples of Christ were still asking, “Lord, are you going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?”

Even the disciples who knew Jesus so well, and saw him resurrected from the dead, still did not understand that Christ’s Kingdom was not one of military conquest. They did not fully understand that Christ was the Prince of Peace.

**<sup>7</sup> The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.** The disciples thought Jesus was coming back imminently. Therefore, the implied message was to engage in the most important tasks with urgency because of the little time remaining. Christ’s return did not happen then – and we are now 2,000 years later. Yet, the urgency is no less - Christ is coming back. Are we open to being alert and of sober mind so that we can pray? *Prayer is the gateway which helps us be open to God.* Prayer is a conversation with God –most often not in audible words, but in the understanding of God’s will for us through his channel, the Holy Spirit.

**<sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.** Are we open to this as well? Loving deeply is a tall order, and the results are that love helps us to cover over and not see the shortcomings of others. This promotes unity and peace on earth! If we are open to God we are open to love. Love is the outcome when we are open to God. In Discernment we are encouraged to be alert and pray to receive from God and be open to God.

Being open to the way of love is not easy - we need the strength God provides through the Holy Spirit in prayer!

Peter directly encourages his audience to love – ‘Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling’ (verse 9).

‘Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do

so as one who speaks the very words of God (verses 10, 11).’ The vision is to love deeply. A means to accomplish this is through prayer.

**If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen (verse 11b).** Being open to God is not easy - Prayer is central to this! We need the strength that God provides. The Holy Spirit is the strength God provides and this strength works through us in prayer.

At the time of the Civil Rights Movement, the Civil rights leader, Martin Luther King received death threats on himself and his family. He got to the point where he felt he couldn't take it anymore. King realized how weak he was. He discovered then that his faith had to become real to him – he had to know God for himself. In prayer he bowed down over a cup of coffee and said *‘Lord, I’m down here trying to do what’s right. I think I’m right. I think the cause we represent is right. But Lord, I must confess that I’m weak now. I’m faltering. I’m losing my courage...’* Then King said he could hear a voice - an inner voice say to him, *‘Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you, even until the end of the world.’*...King heard the voice of Jesus saying to him to fight on. The promise he heard was that he would never be left alone – no never alone!

A few nights later a bomb exploded on the front verandah of the King home. No one was hurt, thankfully. King shared that his experience with hearing the words from Christ a few days earlier gave him the strength to face what was ahead. He came back to this experience often and that experience continued to strengthen him.

Desiring the will of God also means to be open to God. Are you open to the command to love others as Christ has loved you? We are weak, but our Lord is strong. The end of all things is near. Let us be alert and of sober mind so that we may pray. Amen.