

“Connecting the Gospel to Life: Learning from 1 Peter”^{***}

Series: “The Gospel Disconnect”

Main Idea: We learn from 1 Peter that connecting the gospel to life involves five one-another responsibilities.

An urgent matter: Having seen the gospel panorama, we must address the gospel disconnect.

1. The gospel must be connected to life.
2. The epistles show us how.
- I. We are to love one another (1:22).
- II. We are to live in harmony with one another (3:8).
- III. We are to offer hospitality to one another (4:9).
 - A. We’re not owners of the things we possess, but managers.
 - B. We’re to use what we have received to serve others for God’s praise.
- IV. We are to clothe ourselves in humility toward one another (5:5).
- V. We are to greet one another (5:14).

The Bottom Line: We are called to put the gospel on display.

1. By loving one another, we demonstrate the sacrificial nature of the gospel.
2. By living in harmony with one another, we demonstrate the transformational nature of the gospel.
3. By being hospitable with one another, we demonstrate the gracious nature of the gospel.
4. By being humble with one another, we demonstrate the God-centeredness of the gospel.
5. By greeting one another, we demonstrate the incarnational nature of the gospel.

For the past six weeks we’ve been seeing and savoring the good news of Jesus Christ, in a series entitled, *The Gospel Panorama*. What a privilege! We’ve considered carefully the amazing work accomplished by Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried and raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and who later appeared, appeared, appeared, and appeared, to over 500 people before He returned to heaven.

Last week we asked the question, *to what end?* What are we supposed to do with the gospel panorama? The initial answer, as we saw, is to *believe* it, then *preach* it.

That’s where I thought we’d stop our series. But I couldn’t shake a reality. Believe it, preach it, doesn’t go far enough. There’s more. There has to be more.

I saw it first when I was in the sixth or seventh grade, and met Richard. I had just become a Christian, had moved to a new school, and was looking for friends. Richard rode the same bus I rode, and he told me he was a Christian. I was so encouraged! He said he had done what I had done. He had believed in Jesus. He believed in the One who died on the cross for sinners, and rose again. That’s what Richard told me.

But as I listened to Richard on the bus in the days and weeks that followed, I heard something else coming out of his mouth. And I cannot repeat those words, for Richard sounded just like my other peers on the bus who didn’t claim to believe in Jesus.

I saw a disconnect, and I’ve seen it countless times since those junior high days. I saw it a few years ago when a friend of mine from the community was taken to the hospital in an emergency situation. I went into the ER with him and stood next to his bed. It was serious, and the doctors weren’t sure what was going to happen. I could see my friend was not only hurting, but afraid, so I asked him if I could pray for him. He said that would be fine. Then I asked him if he knew Jesus Christ as his Savior, and he surprised me by saying, he did. I asked him when he became a Christian, and he told me

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached on 4/21/13 as part of our series, “A People to Live With in the Crucible of Suffering”.

^{***} Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

it happened when he was a boy. I was shocked, and said, “Really? I’ve known you for thirty years, and you’ve never told me that.” He said, “Well, it’s private.”

Our community is filled with people, like Richard, like my friend. I’ve talked to so many of them, and so have you, no doubt, people who say they believe the gospel, but don’t seem to be affected by the gospel they say they believe. They don’t sound like Jesus. They don’t live like Jesus taught. They have little or no meaningful connection with a local church, as Jesus instructed His followers to have.

There’s a huge disconnect. Have you talked with someone recently, perhaps a neighbor, told them you were a Christian, and heard them say, “Oh, me too!” And you found yourself scratching your head, because, as they say, the talk was there, but not the walk.

So no, my friends, we can’t close the book on our gospel panorama series, not yet.

An urgent matter: Having seen the gospel panorama, we must address the gospel disconnect.

What is the solution for the gospel disconnect? According to the New Testament, there is a solution. It begins with the church. How do I know? For many reasons.

For starters, it’s why Luke wrote two books for his friend Theophilus. He wrote his first book, the gospel, to introduce his friend to Jesus Christ and his redemptive work. But what was his second book? We call it the book of Acts. And why did he write Acts? To introduce his friend to the body of Christ, the church. Without Christ, there’s no eternal life. Without Christ’s church, there’s no life as Christ intends, rather a disconnect.

We need the church for many reasons. The Lord designed His church to provide instruction, encouragement, accountability, and so much more, for those who believe in Him. Here’s a vital reason for the church.

1. The gospel must be connected to life. Why? Because something happens after we believe the gospel. What happens is that we sin. We fall short. This is true for those who are in church and for those who are not in church. But the latter have no needed instruction for dealing with the problems, no encouragement, no modeling, nor accountability.

It is vital that we not only believe the gospel, and preach the gospel, but also that we live in light of the gospel. And to do that, we must learn how.

And where do we learn this? In the Bible, yes, but where? Thankfully, the Lord has given to His church a valuable treasure called the epistles.

2. The epistles show us how. Think of it this way. The four gospels introduce us to Christ. The book of Acts introduces us to Christ’s church. But it’s the 21 epistles that show us how to live for Christ, in connection with His church, in the real world.

In a sense, the gospel disconnect is inevitable. We all enter the family of God as babies, and spiritual babies don’t yet know what they need to know. Oh, they know Jesus, but they don’t yet know how to live for Jesus, especially when life gets hard. They need to be taught. They need to learn how to connect the gospel to life.

You say, “Wait a minute. Back up. You said the church is the solution for the gospel disconnect. I know people who go to church who are living in ways that are unattractive to the gospel. How do you explain that?”

That’s a good question, and there are many potential answers. Here’s one. What kind of church is it? Is it a church that takes the epistles seriously? We’ll see what that

means in a moment, but in part it means this. Is the church teaching its members to connect the gospel to life the way the New Testament epistles do?

For instance, in Titus 2:1 Paul instructs Pastor Titus, “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” In other words, it’s not enough to teach sound doctrine (i.e. the tenets of the gospel message), but also what *accords with it*. Sound doctrine needs to be believed, yes, but also connected to life.

So if we’re seeing a disconnect, start here. Is the church teaching the people who attend, not only how to “get saved”, but how to live like saved people? Is it preaching the whole counsel of God’s Word (to borrow a phrase from Paul in Acts 20)? In many cases, sadly, this is not happening. Churches are not like those we read about in the epistles, where people are taught to address their problems in light of the gospel.

This is where we’re heading. We need to address the gospel disconnect. How? By going to the epistles, not to do an in-depth, verse by verse look, but rather, by taking a flyover view of some of the epistles, one per week. We want to learn how to connect the gospel to real life, starting today with 1 Peter.

Let’s read a portion of this epistle together. As I read, notice how Peter addresses a problem (how to live under abusive authorities) by giving a clear sighting of the cross.

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:18-25

Peter’s first epistle is one of the most practical, relevant books you can read if you want to know how to live for Jesus in this hostile world. We’re introduced to the first readers of this epistle in 1:1, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.”

Those are five Roman provinces on the peninsula of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. Peter wrote this letter, according to 5:12, to encourage these disciples of Jesus to stand fast in the true grace of God. These were tense days for Jesus’ followers, and Peter knew things were only going to get worse.

And they did. He wrote this letter around AD 63 or 64, from Babylon (5:13; possibly a cryptic reference to Rome). The following year, in AD 64, Nero burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians, which was about the same time he authorized the execution of the apostle Paul. Just a couple of years after that, around AD 67, Peter himself was killed by the Romans, being crucified upside down. And then Nero turned up the heat on other Christians, in Rome and beyond.

So Peter knew it was coming, and he wrote this letter to prepare his brothers and sisters for wartime gospel work. He knew the fiery trial he was feeling firsthand would soon spread to other regions, including to Asia Minor, and he wanted to prepare God’s people for the challenge. One commentator suggests that 1 Peter was “a handbook written for ambassadors to a hostile foreign land.”²

That’s who we are, beloved, ambassadors of Jesus Christ. He has sent us to be His representatives in the world, to make Him known. But how can we do that if the world is hostile and doesn’t want us around? That’s the situation that was facing Peter’s readers, and we’re still facing it today.

Peter shows us how. He connects the gospel to life. But he doesn’t write like Paul. We’ve looked at Paul’s letters before. Peter isn’t Paul. In Paul’s letters, Paul

² Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), . *Vol. 2: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (838). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

begins with doctrine in the first section, then moves to duty in the second section. Peter doesn't do that. He doesn't organize his thoughts like Paul. He mixes gospel sightings and gospel implications, or we might say, doctrine and duty, throughout his letter.

I printed out Peter's letter on two pieces of paper. I wanted to see something, and here it is. I took a yellow highlighter and marked every time Peter refers to Christ's gospel work. You can't miss it. Peter connects gospel to life throughout this letter. There are 105 verses in 1 Peter, and Peter refers to the gospel in 18 of these verses, in every chapter. So in 17% of his letter, Peter keeps pointing attention to the gospel panorama, and then he connects it to life.

We don't have time to look at the whole letter, let alone exegete it. I want us to see one way Peter links the gospel to life. It's by his use of what we call "one another commandments". There are five of them in 1 Peter.

This is key. When the gospel is connected to life, as it needs to be, it affects our relationships right here, in the church, in five very practical ways.

I. We are to love one another (1:22).

Notice 1:22 (NIV), "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."

Peter talks a lot about our relationships with each other in this epistle. It's not just because life is better when we get along, though it is. Something bigger is at stake, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ. We who have received such incredible divine care, are now called to extend the same kind of care to others.

Here's where it begins. We are to love one another.

When we're hurting, our tendency is to turn inward, and if we're not careful, we can become self-absorbed. Don't let that happen, says Peter. We're called to live with an others-oriented focus. And not just in a superficial way either. *Love one another deeply, from the heart.*

Sound familiar? It should. Peter learned this from Jesus who commanded the Twelve in John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Here's where being an ambassador for Jesus in a hostile world starts. We must love one another. This means we do for each other what our God has done with us, a responsibility that's so vital that Peter repeats it three more times in his epistle (in 2:17, "Love the brotherhood of believers." In 3:8, "Love as brothers." In 4:8, "Love each other deeply.").

I hope you love your family, and your neighbors, and the people you work with, but that's not what we're commanded here. Under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, Peter commands us four times in this epistle to love our forever family, to love *one another*, and to do so deeply.

Do you? Do you love the members of your church family? Is there evidence that you are putting their interests ahead of your own? That's what love is and does.

For example, in Acts 2 we're told, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (44-46)." There's the evidence of love, giving something to your fellow church member who needs it, getting

together with your brothers to do evangelism, inviting them to your homes to enjoy a meal and good fellowship.

That's what love looks like. Does that describe you and the way you interact with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Twice this past week our ladies (and some men) provided a funeral meal for grieving families. It was an encouraging sight, and it demonstrated the kind of love for others that Peter is calling for here.

What motivates this love? Don't miss this. Look back at the previous verses. What does Peter mention in verse 19? We were ransomed with "the precious blood of Christ." Then look at verse 21, which says, "who through Him are believes in God, who raised him from the dead." How does Peter motivate church members to love each other? He calls to mind the gospel panorama. See Him there on the cross? See His empty tomb? He did that for us, brothers and sisters. He loved us that way. Now love each other the same way.

Are you struggling to love someone right now? Then don't look within, for you'll never find the strength there. Look back. Look to the One who loved us when we were unlovely, who died for us, who rose again to break the power of our selfishness. And He will not only inspire you, but enable you to love that person.

But there's more. Peter takes it a step further with his second one another.

II. We are to live in harmony with one another (3:8).

That's Peter's exhortation in 3:8 (NIV), "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." This isn't technically a "one another command," for the words "one another" don't appear in the Greek text, but you could certainly make the case that the sense is there. The ESV says, "Have unity of mind." The NAS says, "Be harmonious." The AV says, "Be ye all of one mind." And the sense is, do this *with one another*.

Brothers, if we're going to make Christ known in a hostile world, we must be united on the home front. This is not natural, for we are different. We have different interests and perspectives and gifts and aspirations. We have differing opinions when it comes to how to spend money, and what's good to eat, and what to do for entertainment, and how to educate our children, and on and on.

So can people with such differences experience harmony? Here's the answer. By focusing on and cherishing what we have in common. And what is that? It's not *what*, but *who*. It's a person. Do you see Him, hanging there, abused and bloodied, bearing our sins? If we're going to have unity, we must see Him. We must take our eyes off of our differences and see this amazing Person that we have in common.

It's not coincidental that Peter keeps giving his readers clear, crisp sightings of the cross in this letter. He begins his letter with it in 1:2, when he says that we were chosen "for sprinkling with his blood." In 2:4 he reminds us that we have come to Him, "a living stone rejected by men." Did someone reject you one time in this church, and not do what you recommended? Look at Him, dear friend, the One who was *rejected by men* for us.

Peter reminds us in 2:22–24, "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

Friends, there's how people with great differences can experience great harmony, by thinking about and remembering the person we have in common, Jesus Christ, and the sacrifice He made for us all. That provides the power to fix any marriage conflict, any friendship strain, any parenting tension, between two believers. Get both parties focused, not on their differences, and certainly not on their own interests, but on their Savior, and what they have in common in their Savior and what He desires to accomplish in and through them.

As two people pursue pleasing Christ together, they will in turn begin to experience the kind of harmony that both Peter insists we exhibit. If it's not happening, there's a disconnect, and the solution is a fresh sighting of the gospel.

So answer this. Are you living in harmony with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Friends, the apostles wouldn't give us these exhortations if this happened naturally. It doesn't. It takes work. This is a one another command because if we don't work at it, it doesn't happen.

You say, "To be honest, it's not happening. I'm not experiencing much harmony with So-and-so. What should I do?"

First, get alone with your Bible, your hymnbook, and your Savior, and gaze at His cross, and sing about His cross, and ask Him to help you love your brother or sister in the way He loved you. Then put into practice what Peter says next, some very helpful follow-up commands. Be sympathetic. Love as brothers. Be compassionate. Be humble. Don't repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing.

And why? "Because to this you were called," says Peter once again in verse 9. This is our gospel calling, to walk in Jesus' steps and so put His gospel on display for the world to see.

Here's another way we're to do this.

III. We are to offer hospitality to one another (4:9).

Notice 4:9 (ESV), "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." And since this command follows on the heels of the command to "love each other deeply" in verse 8, we can conclude that offering hospitality is a very practical expression of expressing a deep love for one another.

Offer hospitality to one another. *Philoxenos* is the Greek word. It literally means "loving strangers" (from *phileo*, to love, and *xenos*, a stranger). And not simply with talk, but action, practical needs meeting action.

We show hospitality when we use what we have to care for others. Our time. Our abilities. Our experiences. And certainly our possessions. We open our lives and homes to others. We share our food with them, our kitchen table, our bedroom, our car. We use what we have to refresh them, to meet the needs that they have.

And why would we do this? Why would we inconvenience ourselves by opening our homes to someone else? Notice how Peter begins to answer that question, in the first verse of chapter four, in verse 1. "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh." There's why we inconvenience ourselves. He did, all the way to giving His life for us.

With that gospel sighting in place, Peter then builds on it and connects it to life. He reminds us of two realities.

A. We're not owners of the things we possess, but managers. That's Peter's point in verse 10 (NIV), "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

So, if I have something—a house, furniture, food, health, freedom, people in my life—it's all a gift from God. And what He has given to me by His grace is still ultimately His. I'm just the administrator, the *manager*, of it. And He wants me to faithfully administer His grace. This brings us to a second reality.

B. We're to use what we have received to serve others for God's praise.

That's in essence what Peter says in verse 11 (NIV), "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it 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."

So answer this. What do you have? A house? Some furniture? Food in your refrigerator? Do you see yourself as an owner or manager of what you have? When we see ourselves as managers, then we're looking for opportunities the Owner sends our way to use these gifts for His purposes. And showing hospitality to a brother in need is one way He says He wants these gifts to be used.

In a couple of weeks, a pastor and his family from Romania (Nicu and Marta Sotir, and their children) will be visiting us, on a Tuesday through Friday. There's an opportunity for putting this verse into practice. Why not invite them to your home for a meal, along with another family or two, and put the gospel on display?

Of course, you don't have to wait. Why not offer hospitality to someone today after church? Invite someone you don't know very well to join you for lunch, and in so doing, share your life and love with that person, for the glory of Christ.

IV. We are to clothe ourselves in humility toward one another (5:5).

It's interesting how Peter closes out his letter. He gives an exhortation to the elders in the first paragraph of chapter five, urging them to shepherd God's flock, not as dictators but servants.

And then he offers this charge in 5:5, "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

Close yourselves with *humility*. The Greek is *tapeinophrosyne*, literally, "lowliness of mind." Before we came to know Jesus, life was all about us. We thought about us. We lived for us. We assumed God existed for us, and people did too, and we got ticked off when they slighted us. We did not have lowliness of mind. We had bigness of mind, and our minds never stopped thinking about us. Even when we thought of others, we were wondering what we'd get out of it.

And then we learned about the One who is truly great, who humbled Himself in order to rescue us. He left His home in heaven, left the companionship of His Father and the worship of angels, took on Himself the frailty of human flesh, and walked a self-denying road that took Him all the way to a cruel death on a cross.

That's when we learned what life is all about. Coming to know Jesus and His salvation, and then living like Jesus, with lowliness of mind.

But Peter doesn't merely say, "Be humble." He says, "Clothe yourselves with humility." Humility is our wardrobe. We put it on and never take it off. Everywhere we go, it's with us. It's what people should see when they look at us. Not self, but a self-denying reflection of Him.

And not just the wardrobe of humility, but humility exhibited specifically *toward one another*. Our humility should show up, initially, in our relationships with each other. We're called to be a loving, harmonious, hospitable, humble people.

I say *initially* because it doesn't stop there. In the next two verses Peter says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, [and when we do here are the evidences; one...] that he may lift you up in due time. [and the second evidence...] Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (6-7)." People who walk humbly with God wait on God's timing, and they cast their cares on Him.

Ponder again this important assignment. We're to clothe ourselves in humility toward one another. This is so practical. Church members who are clothed in humility don't fight with each other. They'll fight *for* each other, and they'll fight to restore each other. And they'll fight to work through their differences. But they won't fight *with* each other.

Why would they do that? They have no reason to do that. They've already died to themselves. They're not living for their rights and opinions and worship styles and clothing preferences and program choices and ministry methods.

It's worth noting how Peter begins this final chapter, with his charge to elders and all of us to be humble. How does He begin? Look at verse 1. "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and *a witness of the sufferings of Christ*."

There it is again. See the gospel panorama (and keep seeing it), and make the necessary gospel connections to life.

By the way, in case you're wondering, "Do persecuted believers struggle with putting on humility towards each other?" You wouldn't think they would. You'd think the world's attack would inspire them to pull together.

I was stunned a few years ago when I heard that some Chinese brothers were arrested by the communist authorities. That's not uncommon. Christians are arrested for their faith all the time in China. But this isn't common. Do you know who turned in these particular believers? Some other Christians did. Do you know why? Because of jealousy. Their brothers were receiving some favors they wanted and thought they deserved, so they betrayed their own brothers to the Christ-hating authorities.

Yes, believers facing persecution need humility. And so do those not facing persecution. Which is yet another reason why we need fresh gazes upon the gospel panorama.

V. We are to greet one another (5:14).

In the final verse of his letter, Peter says, "Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ (14)."

It's such a simple thing, but it communicates so much. A greeting. When we see each other after being separated for a period of time, we don't do what the world does. We don't look at the ground and avoid eye contact. We don't cut in front of the other person and fight for the best seats. We don't act like there's no one else in the room.

How could we behave in such self-absorbed ways? This other person isn't a stranger to me. He's someone I'm going to spend eternity with. He's a blood-bought brother. And so we greet one another by using our words and our touch to express the bond we have in Christ.

"Hello, brother! It's good to see you and spend this time with you!" we say as we extend our hand for a handshake, or perhaps an embrace, or maybe a kiss on the cheek.

While the particular expression depends on the context and situation, the fact that there will *be* an expression never changes.

This is the power of the gospel. When we see our Savior on that tree, we find all the power and incentive we need, to love one another, to live in harmony with one another, to offer hospitality to one another, to clothe ourselves in humility toward one another, and to greet one another. Anything less is an indication of a gospel disconnect.

The Bottom Line: We are called to put the gospel on display.

Think of it this way. The gospel is objective, historical good news. It's the account of something that God has done. God sent His Son into the world. God's Son died on a cross in the place of condemned sinners, was raised from the dead after three days, returned to heaven, and now freely gives eternal life to all who repent and believe in Him. That's the gospel.

When people who have believed the gospel fulfill their one another responsibilities, they're actually engaging in "show and tell" with the gospel. It's true.

1. *By loving one another, we demonstrate the sacrificial nature of the gospel.* That's what love is. Sacrificing for the good of another. And when we do that, we're doing what God did with us. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God gave. God gave sacrificially to rescue us. When we choose to give, when we choose to *love* one another, we're resembling our saving God. The world can't see God, but it can see us, and it learns about God and His gospel by looking at us.

2. *By living in harmony with one another, we demonstrate the transformational nature of the gospel.* Sinners don't naturally live in harmony with one another. They fight. They insist they're right and demand their rights. So when redeemed sinners start living in harmony with one another, it indicates they're not who they used to be. They're being transformed inside-out. And the transformation, of course, is the accomplishment of the gospel.

Just think. What could motivate a wife to work hard at loving a hard to get along with husband, as Peter says she should in chapter 3? And what would enable people who've lost their homes and businesses to submit to the very authorities that initiated those losses in the first place, as Peter exhorts them to in chapters 2 & 4?

It's not because they've reformed themselves. It's because they are being *transformed* by the gospel itself.

3. *By being hospitable with one another, we demonstrate the gracious nature of the gospel.* Grace is giving to others what they don't deserve, right? Unmerited favor and help. That's grace.

Think of what happens every time we show hospitality to a brother or sister. Not to a business client, for there could be ulterior motives in that. Or to a family member, for that's what it means to be family. But hospitality is loving strangers, or at least, people who are currently strangers, for they won't be strangers after we take this step.

When we show hospitality, we give, don't we? We give our food to someone. We give the use of our guest room to someone. We give our time to someone, and our listening ear, and our affection.

Do they deserve it? No. If I'm doing it just because they did it for me once, sort of tit for tat, that's not true hospitality. We're not doing it because they deserve it. We're doing it because that's what God has done with us. Grace received, now grace shared.

Isn't that what Jesus said in Luke 6:34-36? "If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

In Luke 14:12-14, Jesus said, in essence, "If you really want to show hospitality, go invite the ones who can't repay you, the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. Do that, and then you'll be blessed."

4. *By being humble with one another, we demonstrate the God-centeredness of the gospel.* Think carefully now. The gospel, at least as the Bible presents it, is very God-centered. God planned the gospel. God performed the gospel. God receives the glory for the gospel. "To the praise of the glory of His grace," says Paul three times after rehearsing the gospel in Ephesians 1.

But that's our problem. We don't enter the world God-centered. We enter the world me-centered. It's all about me. I'm enslaved to me, to my passions and self-advancing pursuits. Until I meet Jesus. And when I see Jesus, I learn there's another way to live. And it convicts me, because I don't live that way. But when, by God's grace, I receive Jesus as my Savior and Lord, He comes into my life and enables me to live this new, God-centered way. He did that for so many of us in this room, and will do it for others, if you will but ask Him, even now.

5. *By greeting one another, we demonstrate the incarnational nature of the gospel.* Incarnation. In-carne. In flesh. That's what God's Son did. He left heaven, took on flesh, and came into our world.

And that's what happens when we greet one another. We move out of our comfort zone. We initiate contact with another person. We go to where they are, and we speak to them, and we touch them, and if we do it well, we bring benefit to them by encouraging them and perhaps lifting their burden. And most significantly, we put on display the incarnational nature of the gospel itself.

So let's see the gospel, and believe it, and preach it. But let's keep seeing the gospel, and live in light of the connections it produces. All to His glory.

Closing Song: #372 "*Living for Jesus*" (all four verses)

April Benediction: 2 Peter 1:2

Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning we began a new series, "*The Gospel Disconnect*," as a follow-up to our last series, "*The Gospel Panorama*." Discuss the title. What is the "gospel disconnect"? What causes it? What are some examples of it? What is the solution for it?
2. The New Testament epistles are vital if we are to address the problem of the gospel disconnect. Why so, and how so?
3. This morning we explored how Peter connects the gospel to life in 1 Peter, by giving five one-another commands. What are these commands? Take time to read each of them again. What is the relationship between them?
4. What do we learn about the gospel from these five commands? How do they address the problem of the gospel disconnect?
5. The church is vital if we are going to connect the gospel to life. How so? After discussing, spend time praying for your church family in light of what we have learned from 1 Peter.