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##Putting the Discipleship Pieces Together
1 Peter 1:13-16 (NRSV)
September 25, 2011

Pieces to the Discipleship Puzzle

Most folks have at least tried once to complete a jigsaw puzzle. You may have put together a very elaborate puzzle that is worth framing as a picture or perhaps a very simple one. One thing is for certain, whether the size of your puzzle is 300 pieces or 30, if there are pieces missing, then you cannot finish the puzzle and see the complete picture.

The scripture we have just heard could really be broken into two puzzle pictures. 1 Peter 1:10-12 is the picture laid out of what God has been bringing about over the ages. Piece by piece, God putting in place His plan to fully and completely reveal who he is and how he was reaching out to love and friendship to the world. Peter writes that the prophets of old were used by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit to be a part of witnessing to the gift of God's love that would come uniquely in Jesus Christ. Peter said prophets **testified in advance about both the suffering of Jesus and the glory for which he was destined.** The people that Peter was writing to had been given the complete picture of good news that Jesus suffered for our sins, but the resurrection gave him victory over sin. But there is shift from this picture that Peter describes. The Apostle moves from telling the people how the pieces to the salvation puzzle were seen in the suffering and glory of Jesus to making it clear there is another puzzle picture that needs completing.

Verse 13 begins with one word that indicates that for you and me and anyone who confesses to be Christian there are some pieces to this puzzle that we need to put into place in our everyday life. The one word that tips us off is the word **"therefore."** Therefore is a

word that **is communicating because God** has completed the placement of all the pieces to the puzzle of salvation for us through Jesus Christ; now there is something we are to do.

Verses 13-16 give us the principles to put into place in our lives so that the good news of Jesus Christ make an impact.

Piece 1) Prepare for action v.13

Piece 1: is found in verse 13 when it says, “**Therefore, Prepare your minds for action...**” God is ready to work through your life today; so get ready for action for movement. The problem with 21st century Christianity at least in America is we Christians are seen coming to a building sitting, listening and studying. We prepare, discuss and study; but too often our study doesn't lead to action beyond the church building. We have closing prayer until we all come back again to listen to the preacher and study some more. It's good to seek knowledge; but perhaps the missing piece to your puzzle can be putting that knowledge of Jesus into greater action.

- We study about Jesus being compassionate but are we doing acts of compassion especially beyond our inner circle of friendships that be a witness about Jesus Christ?
- We study how Jesus and prophets stood boldly and spoke but how bold have we acted where we have witnessed first hand the unfairness and mistreatment.
- We hear of a good cause - but do we plug in an help?

Peter reminds the Christians prepare for action.

Illustration: Preacher and author Francis Chan talked about this lack of in-action when he asked a question to an audience of people and said, what would you do if you had told your kids to clean their room and do their homework while you were gone. When you return, they come rushing into you to tell you they have

memorized your instructions to clean their room and do their homework. They even were so faithful they memorized the your instructions in Hebrew and Greek. But they haven't touched the cleaning of their room or homework. They just studied your instructions and never took action. You would have to sit down and explain to your children they were missing a piece to the puzzle.

God is like that parent that looks at us and probably thinks its great you are remembering scripture, attending worship, maybe even have taken a role in the church, but be sure all we take into our mind is to put into daily living - action, so it doesn't get left at the exit doors of the church.

Piece 2) Discipline yourselves v.13

Piece 2) Peter said “discipline yourselves.” The word discipline in the Greek means literally **to save your mind from....**from some influence that can harm or lead astray or ruin some how. Another piece to seeing more of Christ impact our lives is by taking stock of the attitudes and influences that impact our actions.

Maybe you need to save your mind from:

- Is it fear about the something in the future you have no control over?
- Is it about some lost in the past that is done but you for now keep reliving it?
- Is it an impulsive that gets us into regretful situations?

But a second piece to the discipleship puzzle in being a follower of Jesus is to examine what has our attention, our focus and into what do we invest our thinking.

Klove radio told a story of a NFL player retiring after 6-7 years of play. Although he was offered more money to play one more year if postponed his retirement; he declined the money. He wants to go school, get a business degree and then return to his home

neighborhood to help revitalize it. He is a Christian and greater than the influence of money is the leading of God to have him use his business and entrepreneur gifts to minister in his home community. He is saving his mind from the love of money to make money to minister to others.

Discipline yourselves also carries the message it's a choice we have to make, no one can make it for us. It's a choice about surrendering to godly influences, and many time it will be an uncomfortable choice.

Piece 3) Set all your hope on grace v.13

Piece 3: is found in the words of Peter when he said, “**Set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed...**” Our lives demonstrate everyday what we are counting on, banking, on setting hopes upon for happiness and meaning. I was reading the other day a website that keeps up with changing trends in youth culture. There were various articles about what is influencing youth for the good for the bad. One article said the eating disorders traditionally experience in teenage girls and young women are now growing among young men and teenage boys because they are betting all their hopes and expectations of looking like the guys on the magazine covers.

Peter says take a look at yourself and if you are really betting a great deal on _____ to make you happy, to give you worth, to pull you through, and that something is not Jesus Christ, then we're missing a piece to the discipleship puzzle. God did not speak for generations through holy men and women of old, send his son to go through anguish, raise him to new life for him to be a one hour consideration on Sunday.

There is a church by the name of Biltmore Baptist and they recorded something they did in worship one night to communicate

how different people facing different circumstances were setting their hopes on Jesus Christ. They used ordinary cardboard and black magic marker to communicate, no words. Take a look and see what you think.

Play Video “Tear Down These Walls”

Peter said **“set all your hope on Jesus Christ and the grace he will bring you when he is revealed.”** v.13 We’re not to set a little hope, even 90% but all of our trust on God’s grace to be brought to us when Jesus is revealed to us.

Now some might say, Jesus will be revealed when he comes back for the final time and that would be one interpretation of these words from Peter.

But that video of people going through various trials, some finding victory and some experience tragic losses, but they are claiming Christ is revealing himself in whatever they face, that is their hope. Everyday being a follower of Jesus means we trust in him no matter what each day brings.

Piece 4) Reject past sin to be a part of your present v.14

#Piece 4) The final piece to the discipleship puzzle is when Peter instructs the church to be obedient children and not fall back into the old desires. He tells us to not be “conformed to the desires we formerly held.” The word conforms means to change to something that is unstable. I wonder if Peter was drawing on the teaching of Jesus of which he witnessed at the Sermon on the Mount and we can find in Matthew 7?

The last parable Jesus told in that sermon was about two types of people. He said that there will be the person who heard his words and acts on them. That person is like someone who built their

house on the solid foundation of rock and when the storms came the house stood.

But the person who hears the words of Jesus but refuses to act on his words is like someone building a house on a foundation of sand and when the storms come the foundations is washed away and the house falls.

I won't give a you a laundry list of possible old ways we fall back into because if we are truthful we know what they are. The question is are we seeking the new ways of Christ in our living.

Scripture is crucial to sorting out what is it we need to leave behind and no longer be conformed to because it isn't going to hold up for real joy and meaning. **“Someone has said we need to know the God of the Bible; not the God of our imaginations.”** As long as we ignore the Bible our tendency is going to thinking that gives us permission to slip back into the old ways or neglect what we no we need to do and live.

A piece of the puzzle in seeing God at work in us is leaving behind the attitudes and actions that would not flow from the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

Peter gives the church a picture of the salvation God has given us. In verses 13-16 he gives us 4 pieces to the picture puzzle of discipleship of what our lives should look like because God is real.

The final thing Peter states is a very popular verse that says, **“As he who has called you is holy, be holy yourselves.”** If we really put in place these principles of discipleship then our lives will look more Christ like. If we really strive putting the pieces of discipleship together, then people searching for Jesus can see him through us and through our church.