

Plugged In

I made a discovery today while vacuuming the house. When I wheeled the vacuum cleaner to the living room, I took the plug over to the socket on the wall to plug it in. On the way I stopped to pick some things up off the floor. Then I went to the vacuum cleaner and flipped the switch. Nothing happened. I flipped the switch a few more times, but still nothing happened.

Then I checked the plug end of the power cord. There it was lying on the carpet next to the outlet, right where I had left it. The plug was very near the outlet but I discovered today that it doesn't matter how close it is, if you don't actually plug it in to the socket it won't get any power and the vacuum won't work.

Relationships are like that. We might think we're spending sufficient time with someone, but if we are not really plugged into the other person, the relationship won't work. This week we will learn from Peter's teaching on marriage how to be plugged in to one another. The basic principles in these verses apply to unmarried people also, so let's all study what it means to be in relationships that work.

Monday – Lessons from the Past

"Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means." Claudius Claudianus, 4th c. Roman poet

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:1-7. The principles in this passage are not just for wives and husbands. What principles does this passage teach that guide us in our interactions with those closest to us?

Text Insight - Last week's passage dealt with the submission of slaves to their masters. The week before that dealt with our submission to governing authorities. Submission is a godly attitude we are all called to exhibit. Biblical submission involves living daily with a God consciousness and a willingness to do good no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in (1 Peter 2:19-20).

2. What circumstances do you find yourself in that require submission and respect towards others?
3. What can you glean from Genesis 20:1-18 about Sarah and Abraham's marriage, positive and negative? In what ways could their marriage have benefitted from Peter's instructions?

Digging Deeper (optional): Compare Ananias and Sapphira's marriage in Acts 4:32-5:11 with Priscilla and Aquila's marriage in Acts 18:1-28. What qualities do you think existed in each relationship?

Tuesday – In the Same Way

"My goal in sailing isn't to be brilliant or flashy in individual races, just to be consistent over the long run." Dennis Connor, 4 time America's Cup champion

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:1. Compare the phrase "in the same way" with the list of people we are to respect in 1 Peter 2:17. How does the truth of 2:17 help us to understand what Peter is saying in 3:1?
2. In 1 Peter 3:15-16, we are given insight as to how to conduct our relationships with unbelievers? What is the main point? What does this tell you about your responsibility to those close to you and to those who may be antagonistic to your faith?

Putting it into Practice: Ask God to give you a deep sense of respect for everyone you meet today.

Wednesday – Purity and Reverence

"To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted." Titus 1:15

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:1-2. What comes to mind when you think of purity and reverence?
2. What do Job 4:17 and 2 Samuel 22:31-33 tell you about the source of true purity? What do these verses tell you about the nature of God?
3. How does Philippians 4:8 help you identify the way to pursue purity?

Making it Personal: Are there things you do and think about that draw you away from purity? Turn these over to God and ask for his wisdom and strength to work through you to make your way perfect (2 Sam. 22:33).

Thursday – Gentle and Quiet Spirit

"If we have not quiet in our minds, outward comfort will do no more for us than a golden slipper on a gouty foot." John Bunyan, 17th c. English pastor

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:4. What aspects of your life exhibit gentleness and quietness? What does not?
2. How is God described in Nehemiah 9:16-18? What does this tell you about his ability to handle the times you are not "gentle and quiet?"

Making it Personal: Under what circumstance have you acted similarly to the way God's people are described in Nehemiah? Pray for our gracious, compassionate, loving and patient God to be your guide.

Friday – True Strength

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" 2 Cor. 12:9

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:7. What do you think it means to be considerate of those closest to you?
2. Whatever the phrase "weaker partner" may mean, it does not mean that the Bible views women as weak. Read Proverbs 31:10-31 and list the many ways that the woman of God is described.
3. Where will both men and women find their true strength according to Exodus 15:2, 1 Chronicles 16:8-11 and Nehemiah 8:10, 2 Cor. 12:9? When have you experienced this strength?

Making it Personal: When are you most likely to rely on your own strength and abilities? Ask God to help you remember always to look to him for the strength you need in every moment.

For the Weekend: Re-read 1 Peter 3:1-7. What insights have you found in this week's study regarding your relationships?