Lesson 23 – 1 Peter:

II.	Believers' conduct in everyday circumstances	2:11 – 5:11
	B. Suffering for Christ's Sake:	3:13–4:19
	1) Suffering for Righteousness' sake	3:13–17
	2) Christ's Suffering and Its Triumphant Consequences	3:18-22
	3) A Further Call to Holy Living	4:1-6
	4) Practical Demands of Christian Discipleship	4:7-11
	5) Further Teaching about Christian Suffering	4:12-19

4) Practical Demands of Christian Discipleship, 4:7-11:

"The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen."

v. 7 – "The end of the world is coming soon" – As predicted by the Old Testament Prophets, the 'last days' began with Christ's coming (his birth in human flesh – 1st coming). The next event in salvation history is the second coming of Christ, which will bring the 'end of the world' as we know it. The 'end' could come at any time; therefore, Christians must always be ready for it – see Philippians 4:5; James 5:8; Revelation 1:3, 22:10:

Philippians 4:5 – "Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon."

James 5:8 – "You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near."

Revelation 1:3 – "God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near."

Revelation 22:10 – "The he instructed me, "Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near."

This paragraph (vv. 7-11) concludes the second main section of this letter. It gives us a brief positive indication of the practical demands of Christian discipleship:

1) Christian life should be lived in the light of the impending end of the world.
2) Christian's ought, therefore, to keep their heads, and not be carried away by self-indulgence or excitement.
3) Christian's ought to stay and keep a mental alertness necessary to sustained and effective praying.
4) Christian's ought to make it a priority to actively express love to one another, with the emphasis on showing hospitality.
5) Christians should be faithful in stewardship of their God-given gifts in word and deed to one another.
6) Christians should seek to glorify God through Jssus Christ in everything they do,

v. 7 – "The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers." Believers in Christ know, that Jesus Christ, who has come to suffer and to save, is to be God's agent in the judgment of men. Peter just referred to Him, in verse 5, to "Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead". Believers also know that their true fulfillment of their calling and destiny in Christ lies beyond death and the present world, in a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1:5), at 'the appearing of Jesus Christ' (1:7). This earthly life and the present age are not to go on forever. There will be a termination and consummation of all things. This inevitable end is coming soon. So, believers should think of this as 'impending.' This awareness should cause us to not be complacent and face daily living with a new sense of eternal values. It also should cause us to live a life practicing self-discipline, prayer, and loving service.
Because of this, we should be earnest and disciplined or as the King James Version says "be sober" or of a sound mind. The Greek word (verb) 'sophronein' means to be in one's right mind, or in control of oneself. It is used to contrast both to being 'beside oneself' or 'mad' (2 Cor. 5:13) and to 'thinking too highly of oneself' (Rom. 12:3).
Believers must stay alert and focused in order to give themselves to pray. Peter possibly had in mind here the way in which in the garden of Gethsemane he failed to pray because he went to sleep and failed to watch. As a result, he was unprepared to withstand temptation. See Mark 14:37-40, 66-72:

Mark 14:37-40 – "Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter. 'Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? Keep watch and pray so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before. When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say."

Mark 14: 66-72 – "Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by and noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, "You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth. But Peter denied it, "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed." When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, "This man is definitely one of them! But Peter denied it again. A little later some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, "You must be one of them, because you are a Galilean." Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying – I don't know this man you're talking about! And immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice you will deny three times that you even know me." And he broke down and wept."

v. 8 – "Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins." Active mutual love among Christians is assumed in this verse. The teaching here is that this love is to most important and maintained. This verse is not referring to a warm emotion but rather to a strenuous and sustained effort. The Greek verb used here puts forth the idea of a muscle being stretched and strained. So, it refers to intensity, earnestness, and exercising your powers to the full extent. Most important of all – Peter says – is the practice of love for one another matters more than everything else among Christians.
Love is the comprehensive virtue that should complete and crown all other activity for God.
See Col. 3:14 – "Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."
This kind of love is the priority in Christian living. Christians practicing this love is what distinguishes Christians from others – real children of God and disciples of Christ.
See 1 John 3:14 – "If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead."

See 1 John 4:7-8 – "Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

John 13:34-35 – "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have love you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Peter proceeds to indicate the way in which love works and should work among Christians. It "covers a multitude of sins." It is ready to forgive again and again. It finds a way to shelter the wrongdoer from exposure and condemnation. This is how we ought to treat one another. Proverbs 10:12 says – "Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love makes up for all offenses." This means that love refuses to see faults. See 1 Corinthians 13:5 – "It [Love] does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged."
Peter's thought here is likely inspired by Jesus' teaching that only those who forgive others may expect to continue enjoy God's forgiveness. See Matthew 6:14-15 and Mark 11:25-26:
Matthew 6:14-15 – "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But it you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Mark 11:25-26 – "But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

v. 9 – "Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or place to stay."
Another practical way to show Christian love is by showing hospitality to Christians from other places, who are unknown to you, but need shelter and food. Be friendly to other Christians, who you may a place to stay or a meal. In Peter's Day, this likely meant that Christians should open their homes to Christian missionaries or evangelists or bible teachers. The use of the word 'cheerfully' indicates that there should be no murmuring or complaining. It also suggests that there was a great need and frequency for showing this kind of hospitality and that those showing it could become resentful and complaining.
See Romans 12:13 – "When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality."
The opportunity to show this kind of love [hospitality] should be embraced as a Christian privilege and is a form of service to Christ Himself.
See Matthew 25:35 – "For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home."

As 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 and Hebrews 13:2 says:
2 Corinthians 9:6-8 – "Remember this – a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in you heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others."

Hebrews 13:2 – "Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!"

v. 10 – "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."
Peter tells us here, that every Christian has received some gift from God, a gift which is to be held in trust for the benefit of the whole Church, and to be exercised in ministry for the good of others.
God equips each one of His family or household for service and makes them responsible as a steward to use their gift in service to his brothers and sisters in Christ. God has made us interdependent upon each other. The Greek word for 'serve' is a general word and can refer to all kinds of service rendered to others.

v. 11 – "Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen."
Two types of Christian ministry to the church are distinguished in this verse:

1) Ministry by the spoken word: preaching and teaching. This means that what we say be the words that God would speak.
2) Ministry in deeds or practical kindness, such as showing hospitality. This service could mean money, personal possessions, natural aptitude, or physical strength. We can share (steward) from our abilities to help others. God supplies these resources to us, and we then share or steward them to others.
3) Everything we do – we are to do "to supply" in the sense that we are "to equip" in order "to furnish for the public good." God is the giver and supplier and we are the server, acknowledging that He (God) is the enabler!
4) The goal is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. God is glorified when the variety and value of the gifts of His grace are openly administered in and by our diligent service by His enabling.