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Winning a Spiritual Tug of War

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"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" – 1 Peter 1:13-15.

If you've ever been in a tug-of-war, you know the battle can wage for a short time and then suddenly one team will pull the other over the line. As believers, we're engaged in a spiritual tug-of-war with the world–a system that leaves God out. To assure our victory, Peter gives us four coaching tips.

Four Keys to Victory

First, since the world will pull us toward passivity and indifference we're to "prepare our minds for action." The original reads, "girding up the loins of your minds." The image refers to the robes men wore in the ancient world. When working they would tuck in their robe so it wouldn't trip them. Similarly, we must pull our thoughts together and not let anything prevent us from focusing on God. We need to tuck in negative self-talk like pessimism, unbelief, doubt, cynicism, lust, jealously, anger, greed and other thoughts that could slow us down.

Second, since the world will pull us toward a lack of self-control we must be "self-controlled." We don't want an emotion like fear to pull us away from God. Nor do we want an uncontrolled appetite to drag us toward evil. Instead, we must control our lives in a way that honors Christ.

Third, since the world will pull us toward immediate gratification, we're to fix our hope on the return of Christ. If we believe he could return any moment, it will help how we live each moment.

Fourth, the culture of the world will tug at our heart and try to fit us into its mold. Think about that for a moment. Instead we're to allow God to shape our hearts and minds resulting in a holy life. Before we met the Lord, we had no choice. Now we do.

It's Yours to Win

Every day the tug-of-war starts over. And each day it's yours to win as you follow Peter's advice. Look back over his four tips and consider how you'll put them into practice.