

Harmony for Happidays 1 Peter 3:8-11

INTRODUCTION

How many of you have ever said to your kids or your parents said to you, “Two wrongs don’t make a right?” Yea, me too. What a bunch of whooy. What does that even mean? Two wrongs don’t make a right? I’m not trying to make a right. I’m trying to make them pay. I’m trying to make them feel bad so I can feel better. I remember hearing all the time- usually right before I got a spanking- “Two wrongs don’t make a right.” Then why am I getting this spanking. Why does my wrong and your spanking equal a right? Why can’t I use “Two wrongs don’t make a right” to get out of trouble. Oh, I can remember being a kid hearing that lecture.

And that’s mostly a kid speech right? When adults retaliate for something, we don’t usually hear, “Two wrongs don’t make a right.” In fact, we fine tune retaliation. We get smarter and sneakier.

EXAMPLE: As I was driving this week, I was stopped at a red light and I looked down at my phone. A couple of seconds later I hear a horn honk and I look up and the cars in front of me had pulled away a little. So, do you think I threw down my phone, put my truck in first gear and sped up? No I did not. I looked in my rearview mirror to gauge the attitude of the honker. And he had an attitude. I couldn’t hear him, but you know how you can just tell. So we made eye contact in my rearview mirror and I drove as slow as humanly possible to the interaction where I needed to turn. After I cleared the corner, he accelerates very quickly passed me with the universal one finger dissatisfied wave. Why do grown adults behave that way?

We’ve heard the “Two wrongs” speech but we don’t buy it. Because when we live out “Two wrongs don’t make a right” we lose every time, don’t we? Who’s going to make sure they pay? Who’s going to make them stop? Who’s going to let the honker know I didn’t appreciate his impatience. Revenge, retaliation, repaying, retribution, getting even, settling the score- all words that describe what we’re going to talk about this morning.

Last week we talked about Harmony for the Holidays. We looked in the Bible and found six things that might help build a bridge to harmony: ► seek to understand, stop recruiting, talk less and listen more, plan ahead, don’t get defensive, and protect others. If you tried any of those at your family get-together this past week, I’d love to hear about it. If last week was Harmony for the Holidays, then we might call this week Harmony for the Happidays. ► Once again, we’re going to look to the Bible for some advice on creating harmony in our relationships. If you have a Bible, turn to 1 Peter 3. Peter is writing this letter to several groups of Christians spread out over modern day Turkey. And just like we saw with Paul last week, Peter is concerned about harmony. Let’s read 1 Peter 3:8-11 and then find out what God wants to teach us about harmony and getting even. ►

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ► ¹⁰ For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹ He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

► Since we just talked about the 6 skills last week, I am not going to cover them again.

And most of those things come in verse 8. While the Apostle Paul focused on selflessness, Peter tends to focus on compassion. Every phrase in verse 8- be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble all have a sense of compassion for people.

Instead, I’d like us to discover a couple of ideas that are unique to Peter’s commands regarding harmony. So, let’s jump right in.

Number 1 ► - No revenge. Look again at verse 9.

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, . . .

Another translation of this verse sounds like this:

^{NLT} 1 Peter 3:9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you.

I wish I could tell you there was some tricky Greek confusion going on with this translation, but I can't. It means what it says. And it covers both actions and words. Generally speaking, evil here means anything that is useless, not beneficial or a bad act. No revenge! It's the Bible's version of "Two wrongs don't make a right."

And this is sooo difficult because it goes against everything inside us. We do it with strangers, like my driving example. We expect to see it in sports. Hockey players fight; baseball pitchers hit the other teams batters in retaliation; football players push and shove.

But we also do it in more meaningful relationships with a much deeper impact. And revenge goes even deeper than being defensive like we talked about last week. Being defensive is about protecting ourselves. But revenge is about hurting someone. It's getting even. It's making sure they hurt like you hurt.

It hurts to hear your children say something mean to you or about you. Do you respond by hurting them back? Sometimes this takes the form of disciplining in anger. Sometimes it is hurtful words. Either way, Peter says, "Don't seek revenge."

Husbands or wives- boyfriends, girlfriends- how do you react when your spouse says or does something that hurts you? Do you fire back? And I'm not talking about ignoring things that hurt you. That's not healthy. But neither is seeking revenge for your pain.

Have you ever manipulated a situation at work to get someone in trouble because they did something to you?

There are lots of ways we seek revenge. And Peter says, "Don't!"

And you know what, if that was where it ended, I might be able to make some sense of that. But it gets worse. ► Look at verse 9 again.

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, . . .

Huh? Not only should I not retaliate, but I should respond to evil and insults with blessings? Yea! That's number 2: bless instead.

The Greek work for ► blessing here is *eulogeo*. What does that word look like? It looks like eulogy doesn't it? It's the same word we get eulogy from. So, maybe we could translate this verse

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with a eulogy, . . .

That sounds a little better right? Forget about getting even, I'm getting ahead in this game.

But that isn't really what Peter means. The word for blessing here ► actually means to speak well of or celebrate with praises. Isn't that what a eulogy does? Most eulogies look beyond a person's faults for the good stuff. It doesn't mean we think the person was perfect. It just means we choose to look for the positive things. And that is what Peter has in mind

here. No revenge; speak well of instead. Choose to look beyond the offense and speak well of those who insult you. Speak well of those who harm you. I should speak well of the honker, choosing to look past his impatience and bad attitude.

And ►boy this sounds a little dangerous to me. Because if someone is sitting here in an abusive situation, I don't think God expects us to continue to be victimized and say nice things about our abuser. But we certainly don't have to seek revenge or smear someone's name. And if you find yourself in a situation of being abused or victimized, let me encourage you to use your connection card attached to your worship guide and let us know because we would like to help you. You don't have to stay in an unhealthy situation to give up revenge and bless people.

But in most of our relationships, we aren't talking about abuse. And when it comes to the people who offend us or hurt our feelings or say stuff or do things, Peter says to speak well of them. Give them a blessing.

And some of you are thinking, "Oh, are you kidding me? It's already gonna be a miracle if I can learn not to retaliate, but now you want me to 'bless' them too." I'm afraid so.

And then Peter pulls a little religious authority out. There is a spiritual reason to give up revenge for blessing. It's ►number 3: It's our calling.

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called ...

It's easy to be nice to people who are nice to you, right? Why did I look in the rearview mirror to gage the honker's attitude. Because, if it was a little, "Hey, are you awake" honk, that would have been ok. But the, "Go jerk" honk was not ok.

But Peter says that giving a blessing instead of revenge is actually something we are called to do as Christians. You see, our human nature retaliates. Our human nature wants revenge. Our human nature bad mouths those who hurt us. But God summons us or invites us to a different standard. He calls us to live differently.

You see, as Christians striving to become more like Jesus, the standards are different. The ethic is changed. Our human nature is being transformed to a nature that more closely resembles God's character. And God's character is not about revenge or bad mouthing people who hurt him or getting even.

Jesus didn't behave that way when he lived on earth and his closest friends kept messing up and I don't believe he does it in heaven either. As Christians, God is calling us to set aside revenge and choose to say something good. It's a way of demonstrating grace. It's a way of giving someone something they do not deserve and did not earn.

But there is some good news. ►Let's finish verse 9.

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called **so that *you*** may inherit a blessing.

The "so that" means there is a result or a reward for living out this Christian ethic. There is a prize for those who don't retaliate but bless those who harm them. And that's ►number 4; you earn a reward. You inherit a blessing; people will speak well of you. It might not be the person who hurt you. But people will notice when you seek to bless instead of get even. In fact, you will stand out as different. If people at your work see and hear you holding back revenge, but speaking well of the guy everyone knows is out to get your job, you will be spoken well of. If your family watches you change from a mom or a dad that always retaliates into a parent speaking well of their children, you will be spoken well of. When we live out this Christian ethic, people notice because it is so different. And when we fail to live out this Christian ethic, we and

our God and our faith- well we don't look very different. Christianity and Jesus become just another Sunday ritual that normal people do. And God doesn't want us to be normal. He has called us to be different.

And then Peter quotes Psalm 34 from the Old Testament and gives us 2 more benefits to living with blessing instead of revenge. ►

^{NIV} 1 Peter 3:10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

When we live this Christian ethic, we will enjoy life more and see more good days. When we aren't bogged down with revenge, when our minds are free from retaliation, when we focus on blessing instead of cursing, life seems more enjoyable. We end up with more good days because retaliation or revenge and talking bad about people does not leave us feeling good about life or this day. Some of the crankiest people I know have an axe to grind and talk bad about people all the time.

And then there's that Revenge Regret? You know, when you set out to get even, but you go too far or say too much. And now your attitude of revenge has been replaced with an attitude of regret because you didn't mean for things to go this far or get this bad or happen this way. Who pays that price, you or the person you tried to get even with? Not a good day.

There are benefits to letting go of revenge and blessing those who say and do things against you.

CONCLUSION:

► Let me close with a story:

This story is about a person- a mom- who lives out this Christian ethic. And it involves a friend of mine. One night a young girl made a careless decision to drive and she shouldn't have and she killed another person. And she went to prison. I can't even comprehend the pain and anger and hopelessness and guilt a parent feels when their child is killed. And I can't know what I would do if I came face to face with the perpetrator. But I am in awe of what this mom did. This mom did not seek revenge. When given the chance, she asked the judge for a lighter sentence than he was inclined to give. She never insulted or bad mouthed the young girl who killed her daughter. In fact, she looked at her and said, "I forgive you." To this day, this woman blesses this young girl. She speaks well of her, she encourages her. I have witnessed this unbelievable story of blessing instead of revenge. Frankly, it has challenged me; and it has changed me. Because my friend in this story is the young girl who killed someone. And this mom- an ordinary, everyday person who has a family and goes to work everyday and lives her life the best she can- while she mourns the loss of her daughter- is practicing this Christian ethic that Peter talks about. And I have seen some of the rewards. People speak well of this woman. Her unending pursuit of blessing instead of revenge has caused judges, prison officials and nearly every person who hears this story to pause and take notice blown away by her resolve- her resolve to bless instead of revenge. Because she's different. She has been blessed. And I can only trust that she loves life and has more and ore good days because she isn't looking for revenge. It violates our human nature. It goes against what we expect someone to do or say.

But it does something else. Her blessings give my friend encouragement and permission to be something different when she gets out of prison. She will always know she killed someone; but she will also know she was forgiven by this mom. She will also know she has her victims family's blessing to go make something of herself. She has permission to tell her story so others may not have to endure what these two families have endured. My friend has experienced grace- grace we can't imagine- life changing grace. Because a mom looks for blessings instead of revenge.

Most of us won't deal with something as traumatic as this. But the principle works. No revenge, give a blessing and enjoy the reward.

PRAY

