

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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How to Get Even

Harris Creek. How we doing? Let's go. Let's go. So, I bought a truck once upon a time because it was \$10,000 below book value. And when I'm looking for a vehicle, that's the number one criteria that I'm looking for. Like my hobby is Facebook marketplace. And so, uh, when it was a Dodge Ram, and here's the catch. Okay. There's a catch. You're like, there's always a catch. There was a catch. Uh, it had been a hailstorm, okay, a really bad hailstorm, but I had a plan. I had found someone who does paintless dent repair. You guys ever heard about this?

They pop out dents. It's amazing. I called them, and I sent them a picture of the truck. I'm like, "Hey this truck, this truck is not a replace the hood kind of situation. Like, every two inches on this truck looks like someone took a ball peen hammer to it. I mean, it's dented up front to back, top to bottom." And I'm like, "Can you fix it?" And they're like, "man it's going to take some time. But yes this is what we do all day, every day. We've seen this before. Sure, we can fix it. It's going to cost you, but we can do it." But I'm like, "how much is it going to cost me?" They're like, "that right there, what you've shown me, about \$1,600." I'm like "\$1,600, I'm \$10,000 in the money." I'm like "this is great. Let's go get the truck." I call them up, "Mike you ready?"

He shows up. He's got his crew. It's a, it's a father with three sons and they are out there and they're, they're the kindest people just doing work on this truck the way the process is. First, he walks me through it. He's like "here's what we're gonna do I have this kind of mud. It's like red mud. It's got some dry ice mixture in it. We're gonna take that and smear it on every single dent on the truck. What that's gonna do is it softens the paint allow you to pop out the dent without the paint cracking." He walks me through this.

"You're gonna see us." He's got all his tools. He lays out all the tools. He's goes "You'll see us kind of go in and so this is going to take some hours." I'm like "no problem". I'm in and out, you know talking to them. I heard their story of coming into the country. They're sharing all of this. Im like "Hey do you have a faith?" I share the gospel. He's crying as he's, as he's working on my truck it is amazing. You know? I go in and make them lemonade. It's hot. Bring that out. Just catch up some more. They're like "where's the church?" You know all the family. "Oh, yeah. Oh, man, we're going to come by." This is awesome. This is amazing.

He says, "Hey, you know, this bumper. It's, it's a different color. It's kind of that raw metal. What if we painted that?" I'm like "You can do that?" He goes "yeah, yeah, we could do that." He goes "I could take this the same color as your truck for about 200 bucks." I'm like "Dude, absolutely. Let's do that. That'll be great." And uh, he goes, "Okay, so here's the deal." He finishes up, right? He goes, pulls me aside, four and half hours in, "JP, man, all the dents came out better than I could have imaged. There's two that gave us trouble. We'll come back. We'll come work on those tomorrow. I'm gonna let that sit overnight. Uh, tomorrow we'll come back. We'll, we'll take off all of this."

Cause my truck looked like a leopard at this point. I mean, it was at all these red spots all over it. And he goes, “uh, we’ll come back. We’ll wash all that off. Uh, I’ll, I’ll paint your bumper tomorrow and, and everything’s looking good. And I just, you know, today just for supplies, you just pay me half, uh and then we can settle up tomorrow.” I’m like “absolutely” Give him 800 bucks. I’m like, “What time tomorrow is that?” “He says “How about just 3 PM, work for you?” I was like “You know, I’ll come. I’ll go in early. I’ll leave a little early and I can meet you here at 3 PM.” Great. Next day rolls around 3 PM. He’s not there, but the traffic, you know, who knows what’s going on.

So 3:30 PM didn’t hear from him. 4 PM, “I better call”. Call – “Hey, Mike, uh, uh may I speak with Mike, please?” “Uh sure. Hold on one second.” Click. “Bad connection.” I called back. “May I speak with Mike please?” Click. “What in the world, okay, hold on.” “Uh, hey, uh, I’m, I’m looking for the paintless dent repair, Mike.” Someone on the other line, kind of familiar if I’m honest, like, (JP laughing), “Stop calling.” Click. What? What’s going on? I’m like, who’s going to wipe all the red spots? You know, I’ll go out there, soap and water, you know, get my rag, start wiping down the truck. All the dents are still there. They just covered them up with something. It was a four-and-a-half-hour strategic scam.

Yeah, man. Okay, time out. We’re in lift group, you and me. Okay, here we are. I’ve got all these feels coming at me. “What do I do? I need some counsel guys. What do I do? What’s my next move?” We’re in life group together. “What do I do?”

(Person in the audience responding) “Go take it to a real shop.”

(JP Responds), “That’s helpful. What?”

(Person in the audience responding) “Rejoice in the lord.”

(JP responds), “Always, brother.”

Here is what I hope we do in our life group. Real talk, okay? So, we’re in life group together, right? Here’s what I hope our first step is, because this is going to happen. It’s going to be like “Hey, uh, you know, we got in a fight this week.” “Hey, we’re having this trouble with our neighbor.” “Hey, our son, our daughter, um, man, I went on this date this week, and it didn’t go, you know.” And, and, and, here we are right? We’re in our life group. “Hey, I don’t know what to do.” Here’s what I hope your first step is. Okay? “Hey let me see what, let’s look at what God’s word says.” So that’s, let’s just exercise that muscle. If you learn nothing else today, this will be helpful. First step in life group.

“Hey, let’s see if we can find are there any scriptures that speak into this?” So let’s just say that I’m in your life group and I bring this situation. I hope one of the scriptures that you would take me to is the scripture we are going to be in today, 1 Peter 3. And so, uh we’ll look at 1 Peter 3, 1 Peter 8 and following. But right now, just out the gate, why don't we just read that? I'm gonna, in fact, if you have your Bible, turn to the back, it's in the very back of your Bible, that's where 1 Peter is. And so, you can kind of flip forward from the back and you'll go 2 Peter, then 1 Peter. Um, it's, it's right there really close to Revelation.

And, uh, and just read it. And so if you didn't bring a Bible, no problem. We'll just put it up on the screen for you to read. And so just read this passage and this is going to inform the way that we handle this situation. Just give you a minute to read it to yourself.

All right, here's what's happening in the passage. What I want you to know, it's very easy to read. Very easy to read passage. Uh, super simple to understand. There's nothing tricky in the Greek here. There, there's no context that you would be like, yeah, but what is that? Right, um, it's actually very straightforward passage.

Uh, easy to read. Easy to understand. Extremely difficult to live out. Very hard to practice. Easy to read. Easy to understand. Hard to practice. And it begs the question, "when do we not have to do what the Bible says?" You know, met with a professor once, a teacher, an instructor of theology, lots of letters behind their name, lots of school, lots of seminary, and I said, "hey, help me wrestle with this verse, because I'm reading what it says." And they said, "well, that's the difference between you and me. I don't think we always have to do what the Bible says" and, uh, and, and, and it begs the question, well, gosh, if we open that door, who, when do we, and when do we not have to do what the Bible says? So I want to say out the gate to you is I am a simple person who in my life many, many times I have not done what the scripture says.

And every single time, without exception, I have regretted it every single time. I've looked back and I thought, "I've made a mess of things because I didn't listen to God. How can we clean this up? God, I need your help." Now, many times, by the grace of God, there have been situations where what the scripture said to do was extremely difficult, costly, emotional, uh, financial, extremely difficult.

But, by the grace of God, I chose to do what the scripture says, and every single time, without exception, I've experienced blessing. Okay, so that's how, kind of like, just so you know, my world view. On the text, like, this is true, what I'm sharing with you, I can defend that statement, if you will. And so what I want you to, so I want you to know that my heart today is not to beat you over the head with a text.

My, my motivation is, is like, I just want what to the best of my ability to discern and understand is best for you. I want you to experience the blessings of God in your life and the good life, the abundant life that the scripture promises to those who follow in the Lord. And so that's, that is my motivation.

And so now I want you to think about a time when you were taking advantage of when someone hurt you, when someone took from you, when someone treated you or someone you love dearly, maybe a child. Or a family member unfairly and you're driving down the road and they're no longer present, but you're still having conversations with them in your head and you're thinking about what you would have said or should have said or will say the next time. Or you're in your bed and you're trying to sleep, but you can't sleep because your heart's pounding in your chest as you relive a scenario and think, "uh-uh, and what you want is you just want to get back to them. You want to get back at them." Now, you've experienced hurt and you want to hurt them, and maybe not physically, maybe financially, you want to win.

And you're thinking, "how can I win?" Because y'all are at odds and you're asking the question, "how can we get even? How do I get even?" And that's the, that's the message today. How do we get even from the scripture? When we experience something not fair, how can we get even or how to get even? We're in a series called forged.

Where we're teaching through Peter's first letter, uh, called 1st Peter in the Bible. We're going verse by verse. We find ourselves, uh, midway through chapter 3. Here at verse 8. Uh, just as a reminder, the church is undergoing, uh, tremendous persecution. If you're just joining us for the first time, we've set that up every week. And Peter has said, hey, this is what is happening. Like, I want you to know, so I'm just going to kind of run back through the text. He, he's talked about the trials. In fact, chapter one, verse six, the church, you're going through all kinds of trials. In fact, in chapter two, verse 12, act, they've accused you of doing wrong. And he says in, uh, uh, chapter two, verse 15, there, there's the ignorant talk of foolish people in verse 19, the pain of unjust suffering. And then he's kind of broken this down up until this moment, he has said. "Uh, I want to talk to those who are under authority." And then he says, "I want to talk to, uh, employees and employers. I, I want to talk to wives and husbands." And then this text is going to start finally, so new chapter, new, new idea, new concept. "Finally, all of you. Wives, husbands, employees, employers, those under authority, everyone in the church, all believers." And as we move through this text, we're going to see how we treat each other in the family, how we treat those who have hurt us.

And before you leave here, I want you to know the motive, why God would ask something so seemingly crazy of us. Let's dive in. Verse eight. 1 Peter 3:8, "**Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic,**" sympathies it's same pain. I want to take your pain and make it my pain. I'm sympathetic towards you, uh, 1 Peter 3:8, "**love one another,**" Philadelphia is the Greek. Where are we? Philadelphia, city of brotherly love. 1 Peter 3:8, "**Be compassionate.**" This one's interesting. It's um **ousplachnoi**. It's almost like an onomatopoeia because it translates, be punched in the gut in the best kind of way. Meaning you see something, and it hurts you right here. Like, Oh! For somebody else. 1 Peter 3:8, "**Be compassionate. And humble**" Says and humble. Interesting that none of these words show up anywhere else in the entire Bible except for compassionate. Meaning, Peter is trying to describe a love unlike any other love they've ever experienced with, with just a line of these words that you don't hear all the time.

I want you to know these Christians, these Christ followers, they love different. Like what they do, it's, that's how they stand apart from the world. And so my first point is simply love each other.

1. *Simply love each other.*

He says, love one another, be compassionate and humble, be sympathetic, like minded. My first point is to love one another because it has to start with how we treat each other in the family.

Like I'm not trying in a minute to send you out into the world, uh, like timeshare salesman, and, you know, with, armed with the gospel and two questions. And just thinking, you know, "Hey, let me ask you 1 to 10, 10 being and you're just out there trying to close deals, make things happen all while we can't get along." Because what that does is it opens us to the criticism "of

you're a hypocrite and I don't want anything to do with your God. You guys can't even get along. You guys can't even get along." Why? What are you talking about? "Oh, God is love, and love each other, and this and that. You guys can't even get along."

Right? We cannot open ourselves to that criticism, so the way that we get even is it starts in our family. We've got to love and support one another. And everybody has a family, and in fact, if I was to go to your family for Thanksgiving, and you kind of pull me aside and you say, "Hey, I just want you to know my family's kind of fill in the blank." "What is that? Intense? Hey, they just speak their minds." "You know, aunt so and so, right?" What are you giving me a heads up? "Hey, I just want you to know in my family, we're kind of out there, uh, whatever the adjective is." What Peter is telling you. "Is hey, I just want you to know in in God's family, we're like minded, sympathetic. We love one another. We're compassionate and we're humble." That's how you know it's God's family. And what you're going to see here, what's interesting in this text. Is 1st Peter 3 and Ephesians 4 in Romans 12. Ephesians and Romans being, having written, having been written by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul and this is Peter.

They're very similar. It's almost like Paul and Peter knew each other and had the same Savior. Um. And Paul says this in 12, verse 10, Romans 12, 10. **"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."** In Ephesians 4, 32, he says, **"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."**

It, it was, it's, it's been a hard week, like nothing crazy, you know, just a hard week. I mean, sometimes that happens. I never want to get up here and pretend like everything's great and God is good and rejoice in all circumstances, but which we should, and it's been a hard week and an aspect of that difficulty is just like my wife and I just got sideways and, um, that happens sometimes. And I don't know if you've ever gotten sideways with someone somewhere. All you can really see is your own hurt. It's like, yeah, but you, but, but here's what you did and here's what you said. And man, when I, you know, but you and you play this game, you know, who's, who's going to go first because you've been in church long enough to know, you know what you're supposed to do.

Hey, let me go own a hundred percent of my 2 percent and, and will you forgive me for, and gosh, I shouldn't have. And that's, that's humility. Who's going to go first? Just before I came out in the first service, she texted me, said, "I woke up this morning, I was in the word and, you know, the Lord just revealed this to me and, and I'm, I'm so sorry. Will you please forgive me for, and kind of listed out things" and she just went first. And I thought, you know what? We are a group of people. What Peter is telling us is we go first. We are committed to going first and any time we're hurt when something's not right, we immediately run to how do I go and insert Christ into this situation by going first, sitting on my hands, powering down.

Will you please forgive me for owning everything I can? We just go first. That's what marks the family of God. Sympathetic, sympathy, like mindedness or harmony, right? Compassion, humility, we love each other. Jesus said, "this is how the world is going to know that you belong to me. By the way, you love one another."

Jesus, when he could have prayed anything for us, he prayed, I pray that they would get along. He could have prayed anything like his prayer for you and me and Harris Creek and the body of

faith is that you would get along like Jesus prayed this and he said, “Hey, the distinctive and the same way that you notice a police officer by their badge or someone by their uniform, you know, you know that the Christians by the way they treat each other, that's how you know they're mine. And if they don't treat each other like this, they're not mine.” And so, we can't go out and confuse the world. By not loving one another, there is something so amazing happening in Waco right now, amongst the churches. We love each other. Like, we genuinely love each other. This week, our staff had lunch with Highland staff at Highland.

They hosted us. They catered a meal. And we just sat down and got to go back and forth just praising the work that we see God doing through other churches. I'm on a call every single week with John Durham and, and, and Jimmy Seibert and other pastors, right? Jimmy Hunter and others just celebrating the work that God is doing in our city through each other. It's amazing. And it should not be rare. Like, that's what's crazy. It's like, what is happening that that's not normal everywhere you go? Verse 9. **“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult on the contrary.”** Underline. **“Repay evil with blessing.”** Because. I'll tell you why this. **“You were called so that you may inherit a blessing”** for, and then he goes into Psalm 34. He's teaching expositional Psalm 34, **“whoever would love life and see good days.”** What that means is that phrase, whoever would love life and see good days, whoever wants the good life. Whoever wants to live the good life, if you're here and you're like, man, I showed up today. I want to live the good life.

He's going to say, here's how you do it. “You must keep their, your tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

This is Psalm 34, verses 12 through 16. So, in your Bible, in the margin, you write Psalm 34, verses 12 through 16. And then, I would also write 1 Samuel 21. Because David wrote this psalm when he's running from Saul, the most powerful man in the land, and he's before the Philistines, and he acts like he's crazy so that he's not arrested, tortured, and killed by the, by the, by Abimelech. Okay? He's running, I said he's running from Saul. He's running from everyone. Everybody is after King, or soon to be King, David. And he's on the run, and he pens this psalm. And, and it's almost like Peter's saying, hey, remember when David walked into the cave and could have killed Saul, but he didn't? Uh, Saul tried to kill him many times.

How do you, how would you treat someone who's tried to kill you many times? You, you've got the knife, and their back is turned towards you and they don't see you and it's your opportunity and it's so easy to justify before the Lord, Oh, God gave me this moment. This was a gift from God. But it says something here, it says **“repay evil with blessing.”**

That's my second point. Easy to read, easy to understand. Very hard to do. Repay evil with blessing.

2. Repay evil with blessing.

Why? Well, he says because, verse 9, **“because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”** He's saying because God asked you to, and God is in charge of who gets the reward.

God can take money from them and put it in your account. He can touch them while they sleep so that they no longer breathe. He can wipe out families of people if he so desires. He can do, he is the avenger of such things. It says, leave room for the Lord's vengeance. God's up to whatever the outcome is.

He's in charge. We have faith in Him. And He's saying, hey, I want you to repay evil with blessing because you were called to. And I'm in charge of who gets blessed. And then he says, all right, you want to live the good life and you're here. And all of us and everybody, everybody nods their head. You want to live the good life? Everybody's like, I want to love the good life. Awesome, man. Cause I'm about to lay it out for you straight from the word of God. This is how you live the good life. It's all you got to do. It's all you got to do. We can just look at verses 10 and 11 and he just listed out, **“keep their tongue from evil. The good life is those who speak life.”**

Ephesians 4 verse 29, **“let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up, so that it may benefit those who listen.”** He says, **“turn from evil and do good. The good life is reserved for those who do good. Don't practice evil.”** And then he says, the good life. It says, **“for those who seek peace and pursue it.”**

The good life is for those who pursue peace. The good life is for those who pursue peace. Ephesians 4. 3, I told you the overlap. **“Be diligent at preserving the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. This is the good life.”** You do this, you experience. In doing so, you are experiencing the good life. But I think you and I, we are so offended at those who do evil, so taken aback, so frustrated, so our rights are so infringed upon that we forgot we were those who do evil.

We never see ourselves as the villain. We're always the vigilante looking to build the kingdom and restore peace and go do what's right. But you were the villain. For when you were a sinner, Christ died for you. Don't you see what God's doing? Like his plan, his master plan, his strategy. **“God calls evil people to be his children and then calls them to do good to evil people so that they might become his children.”** Let me read it again. **“God calls evil people to be his children and then calls them to do good to evil people so that they might become his children.”**

You show someone grace, because you receive grace, and then you tell them of the grace that you've received, and why you're able to show them grace. And this is the cyclical, or the cycle that we're in. I was with some, um, I was with some, uh, theologians this week. Brilliant people, lots of letters behind their names, lots of degrees in law. Somebody asked me one time, “are your anti education?” “No.” So for education, especially in ministry, like, absolutely. Like, be educated and, and like, learn everything you can. And these guys, I say that because the guys I, I, I was with, I mean, they've just spent a lot of time in the classroom. Brilliant guys, mad respect.

They, they run an organization called the Eden Project. And their, their expertise. is around having a right view of God. And he was talking about spiritual maturity, and he said, “spiritual maturity is not, you know, knowledge, there are a lot of people that have memorized entire books of the Bible, and they understand when they were written, and the context with which they were written, and all, you know, they're so smart, but they're spiritually infants.”

They're not spiritually mature. And I said, "well, okay, well, so what is spiritual maturity? How do you measure?" I said, "how do you measure or define spiritual maturity to which you might think he would be like, Hmm, that's a great question." Uh, he didn't, he said, "oh, that's easy." And it was like, he was, he was like, "gosh, that's absolute. Like, I can't believe your pastor and just asked me that, you know, it was almost how he responded." And he said this, "so like if you're here and you're like, well, I want to be spiritually mature." He defined what spiritual maturity is. Now you can disagree with his explanation, but this is what he said. He said, "spiritual maturity is loving God, understanding how you are loved by God, and then being a conduit of God's love to others." Okay. Spiritual maturity is loving God, being a con, uh, understanding how you are loved by God, and then being a conduit of God's love towards others. Here's what he's saying.

It's a really simple idea, and I think it might be extremely profound for some of you. He's saying whoever is the most spiritually mature person in this room is the person who most loves God. And most understands that they're loved by God, and they're a conduit of God's love. And so, they, they best love everyone around them. And that is it, but you're like, but what if they haven't memorized a verse?

You know, what if they don't know Romans is in the, is in the New Testament or the Old Testament? Right? No, if they have trusted upon Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins, they are believer, they have the Holy Spirit, you're going to know the level of their spiritual maturity based on their ability to love God, to know that they're loved by God and to love others because they're loved by God.

[00:29:42] And I said, "man, so, so there's some of you here, like, if you're not very good at loving others," you're arguing with me right now. You're like, "no, that's not spiritual maturity." Uh, discipline yourself for godliness, you know, this, that, whatever. I asked, I said, "wait, hold on, man. Are you sure about that?" He was, again, he was like, "are you, like, interesting you're asking me, JP, Pastor JP." He said, "Isn't that what Jesus said?"

And I was like, "oh yeah, well, I mean there's that, you know that whole Matthew 22 great commandment thing where Jesus takes 613 laws and he's asked which of these is the most important?" And he says, "the most important of all of these is that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the second is like it that you would love your neighbor as yourself. And by doing this, you have fulfilled all the law and the prophets. You want to know what it means to be my follower? You love God, and you love others in his name. And it's that simple. And so, if you can't do that, you're not my follower. And to the extent that you're my follower, you will absolutely do that."

And, and I, like we had to say, "yeah, we're like, yeah, and be able to explain, you know, soteriology, and ecclesiology, and eschatology, and No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Love God. Love people." And we're like, "yeah, yeah, but yeah, but, but is that not what Jesus said?" Is it not what Jesus gave us?

It says verse 13. **"Who is going to harm you if you're eager to do good?"** Which I read that and I'm like, somebody, probably. Um You know, I was thinking four guys, um, and, and he

knew that. And that's why he said verse 14, **“but even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened.”**

That's from Isaiah chapter eight, verse 12, you can write that in your margin, **“but in your heart, revere Christ as Lord, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks. You to give the reason for the hope that you live but do this with gentleness and respect.”** Let me say a couple things here. One, it's important to understand that Peter's not talking about someone who got ripped off by the paintless dent repair guys.

He's talking about Christians who are being tortured because they follow Jesus. That's the context of the verse. But he's saying, hey, you need to always give an account to everyone why you are not discouraged in the midst of your friends dying because of their faith. And he's saying, do so with gentleness.

Don't just go out here trying to win arguments in the name of Jesus. Don't try to argue people into the kingdom that you would do so with the gentleness and kindness as you evangelize, keeping a clear conscience, verse 16, **“so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed for their slander.”**

That's the slow road. That's the, that is the slow path. They're going to be ashamed for the way that they commented or, or what they said to you or what they did to you because you're, simply put, above reproach. Because of the way you live. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Okay, suffer for doing good. Wait, what? That's where we short circuit. Because because in America, in 2023, our simple decision matrix, like decision making matrix, we're trying to make a decision, right? Do I do A or do I B? Do I go here, or do I go there? Do I say this, or do I say that, right? Our decision-making matrix is this.

Which of the paths will I suffer the least? And it's unbiblical. And you learned that from school. Logic. Problem solving. You perceive an outcome. And you take the path that gets you the desired outcome. And you're like here, and you're like, well, I don't want to suffer. So, I want to take the path that's going to lead to the least amount of suffering.

And I am, so what does that look like? Well, I hear it every week, man. Every, gosh. Every week. Here. Especially. Okay. If I have that conversation, it's not going to go well. Okay. Well, I don't want to have that conversation because it's not going to go well. Well, that's okay. Awesome. Okay. A couple of things. So if it's not go, if it doesn't, what, what you're saying to your kids and to others, your fellow believers and everyone else is that if a conversation is not going to go well, you should never have it.

But that's not, that can't be true. Sometimes God wants you to have conversations that won't go well. They'll be so costly. It'll be really difficult. You might lose a friend. And he's saying, I want you to have this conversation. Because that's obedience, and I've said it many times. We cannot determine obedience by the outcome or the perceived outcome.

What Peter's saying, “if you suffer for doing good, it doesn't mean you shouldn't do good. And sometimes that conversation that you're to have is to overlook a small offense. Sometimes the conversation that needs to take place is to extend grace to someone. Or to bless them when they've cursed you. Right.”

And you're like, but that's really hard. That's not going to go well. Well, we don't as Christian's measure what we do based on the perceived outcome. Because it's like all of the sudden, we don't know a lot, but we certainly can see the future about how that's going to go. And it's so interesting to me that some of us will pray for resurrections.

We will pray for healing. We will believe God for the supernatural, but we're like, but he's not going to change their heart. It is, it is a really faithless position. Your God is super small. Right? Like, why would we ever pray that God would heal someone who's sick and think, but if I have this conversation with this family member, it's not going to go well. Like, what? I mean, you guys understand the inconsistency there, right?

Like, as I'm saying it, you're like, oh yeah, I kind of see how that's inconsistent. Always be prepared to give an account to everyone for the reason you have hope. And here's my third point.

3. *Christ is the goal.*

Christ is the goal. What do I mean that Christ is the goal? To be like Him, so that you are being conformed to the image and the character of Jesus, and also to make Him known.

That you are sharing Christ with others. This is important, like, because you can't go out here and bless those who curse you unless you have a good motive. And he's saying, hey, if you live your life with the primary motive to be like Jesus, and to make Jesus known, then it will change the way you respond to those circumstances.

If your primary goal as you walk through those doors in a minute is like all I want, like the thing that I want most in life is to be just like Jesus. And the second thing I want most in life is to help everyone as much as they possibly can. Even those who hate me and persecute me, I want them to know Jesus. That's how I'm going to get even with them is as if they're saved. Right? And if that's your primary goal, then it responds, it changes your response, it changes the way that you react to particular situations. It changes your strategy. I spent a lot of time with young adults, um, college students, millennials, Gen Z, now, um, really have given my adult life to studying a generation.

And, um, and here's something I've heard dozens of times, maybe hundreds of times. A younger generation really wants to experience God. They want to feel Him. In fact, they'll measure success in spirituality based on their feelings. Like, hey, did I feel, did I emote, did I cry, did worship make me cry, did I leave stirred? And, you know, that, that, like, I want to have this emote, almost like a drug.

You know, it's like, I want, I want church to do something to me. You know, and so what that has, that mentality has led to, uh, this question dozens of times, maybe hundreds of times. What do I need to do to experience God? What do I need to do to feel close to him? Okay, I'm going to answer it. I'm going to give you the most honest biblical answer that I know to give you right now. Suffer for him. And part two of that, like, with the asterisk, would be unjustly. To an experienced God, suffer for him unjustly. And again, I know these like, bomb statements. There's debate in your mind. Like, wait, hold on. Really? Is that it? Let me, let me, give me a minute. Let me try to prove it. I could go a lot of stories.

Genesis to Revelation. But I'll give you a few. We'll go to Daniel 3. Three guys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar's king, most powerful man in the land. He says, hey, I'm going to build a statue made out of gold, 90 feet tall. Whenever you hear this music, I want you to bow down and worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, we won't. Nebuchadnezzar says, I'm going to throw you in the furnace. I'm going to cook you alive, if you don't. They said, well, you don't understand. The reason we can't worship that is because we worship the one true God. And if you throw us in the furnace, He's going to protect us.

But even if He doesn't, we won't worship your God. And he says, great. Heated up seven times hotter. So hot that the guys who go to throw them in the furnace, they get incinerated. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell into the furnace. And then what happens? If you know the story. Nebuchadnezzar looks in the furnace and says, wait.

Three men went in. Why are there four there? And the fourth one looks like the Son of God. What? In the suffering. unjust suffering for God. God shows up and is present, literally present with them. Okay? Example one. We'll go to how about act seven, uh, Stephen. Stephen is talking to the religious leaders and Jews there and he's saying, hey, you know Jesus, the one you killed? Remember that? You put him on the cross, you buried him, but on the third day he rose from the dead. And they get so mad at Stephen's preaching, they pick up rocks, and they start throwing those rocks at him as hard as they can, with the intentions to kill him, and they are going to succeed. Okay? Uh, and so the rocks, he's like, yeah, Jesus!

And they go, boom, boom, boom. But, you know, and he looks up, as if he's suffering. And about to die, about to breathe his last breath, he looks up and Jesus is there. And he says, I see Jesus standing now at the right hand of God. He's present. Why? Because I'm suffering for him. And so now I tangibly see him and experience the nearness of him. Let's go, Paul.

Did Paul suffer? God told Ananias; Go tell him how much he must suffer in my name. Right? We were like, Oh, Paul's a hero. Paul spent his entire life suffering in Jesus's name. And he said this in Philippians three, "I want to know Christ. Yes. To know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."

I want to know him so much. That I want to suffer like him, and I want to die like him. Okay, now why? Now what is the result of three people experiencing God so, so close they can tangibly see him? Nebuchadnezzar sees there's a fourth person in there. All of Babylon will worship their God. Stephen dies and it says the Christians scattered throughout Judea and Samaria all proclaiming the good news, the gospel spreads.

Paul, the greatest missionary to ever live, wrote 60 percent of the New Testament and gave his life to advancing the gospel. It's all about Christ. The goal is Jesus. To live is Christ, to die is gain. When he's your goal, everything else falls into place. That's how you get even.

So, in summary, treat each other with love.

If I could, man, if I have a prayer for the church, right, we would love one another. Repay evil with blessing. And I want you to know and understand that Christ is the goal, to know Him and to make Him known. That that's what it's all about. Those guys rip me off. I couldn't get a hold of him. I went like many of you, like, you know, I'm a, I'm a, you know, just like strategy.

I'm not dumb, you know, it's like, all right, I'll just call him from another phone. Hey, meet me in this parking lot. I got a car. I need you to repair. I can put it in your disguise. Hey there, buddy. Yeah, listen, I got it. You know, I make it where they don't know who I am, you know, show up, call my buddies. Like, Hey guys.

Can you guys, can y'all come help me with something? Help me with something, you know, be on the front page of the newspaper. I go to life group. I'm like, man, I'm struggling, man. Y'all got to pray for me. I'm so angry right now. Got ripped off. They pray and they share some scripture. I woke up the next day to a notification that morning, got a notification that said, um, 800 dollars had been wired to my account.

To track that down, called the bank, I was like, hey, what happened? How did this happen? What's going on? It was a check deposit. It was like, hey, can you pull up the check and you tell me who, like where, Oh, it's a person in my life group. Call them up. Hey, what are you doing, man? What are you doing? Oh, bro.

It's in the person in my life group. This guy likes more money, you know, it, no, this is like their paycheck to paycheck. It's like, hey, listen, we can, we can move some things around. We can, we can change our budget, we can rethink this month, but it's just not worth you being angry. You know, that's, that's, that's easy.

The best money we'll spend this month is just purchasing your freedom from anger, from revenge. You know, that's not worth it. It's not worth you plot. Like I never feel, I never feel less like a believer than when I plot revenge. And I never feel more like a believer than when I don't do it, you know. And he's like, it's not worth it.

And I think that's why Peter ends like this, this section. Verse 18, next verse. **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the spirit.”** Yeah. He's just saying, hey, Jesus paid for that. He's saying something to you that I want you to understand.

What you get in the end is not fair. Like really terrible things can happen to you here and after all of that you will get more than you could have ever deserved. You would have paid the highest price you could have paid, you would have suffered the greatest sufferings, you're going to say it was all worth it.

That's what's coming to you, it's all been paid for. That's freedom. That's what we receive in and through the gospel. So, to celebrate that in a moment, we're going to take communion, but I just want to give you a minute to pray before you take communion. He says you shouldn't do this with vengeance in your heart. And so, if there's some, if there's someone that you're like, I want to hurt them, I wouldn't take communion unless God gives you the ability to forgive them right now.

Um, let me pray “Lord, Lord, we, we need your help with that, and I just want to give you guys space to think who that is and what they've done and can you give that to the Lord right now? God, as they pray, I just asked you to rush in and heal trauma, heal wounds. Make hearts new. Ask Him. You guys, ask Him. Talk to God. I mean, it's so easy to be distracted, but I mean, this

is a, this is a really strategic moment for you to ask God to do a work in your heart. Anybody hurt you? Amen.

There should be a communion cup near you if you want to take that and just peel that top layer off that, uh, that wafer. Jesus was with his disciples at the Passover meal. Uh, the day before he would be betrayed, and he took the bread and the cup that were on the table and he used it to teach the gospel. And he grabbed the bread he says “this bread It's it represents my body which we broken for you,” that's what's about to happen and Said “whenever you eat it” and he gave us this tradition that we're partaking in today is available to you every week He said, “whenever you eat of it, do so remembering that my body was broken for your sins. It was made even.” Body of Christ. It's so easy to be distracted by, oh, I got to peel this other, how do I get my fingernail in there? And I've done it to stay focused. I just always like to picture Jesus around that table. There's a cup there filled with a red liquid. He said, “this cup is the cup of my new covenant. I'm doing a new work. You no longer need to kill. Bulls and goats and rams. I'm the one and done, the high priest, ultimate mediator, the go between, champion. Now my blood is going to be poured out over your sins. It's going to be atoned for, that means covered.” Second Corinthians 5 says, **“God is no longer counting your sins against you.”** Romans 8, 1. **“For there is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ.”** So, whenever you drink of this cup, do so in remembrance of me, the blood of Jesus.