



### 1 Peter 3:8-11

## Be a source of blessing in your relationships

Summary: Knowing it's your divine duty to be a blessing, choose unity and righteousness over insults and evil.

For several weeks now we have seen Peter say hard things. He tells Christian citizens how to respond to their government; he tells Christian servants how to respond to their masters; and Christians spouses how to respond to their husbands or wives.

Maybe you were able to dodge some of it. Maybe you don't have an employer, so you got away easy that week. Or, maybe you're not married and you could see, OK, that's what I need to keep in mind when looking for a spouse, but it was more theoretical than practical.

Well, this morning we're all in for it. If you are a Christian, this morning is for you, and like the past several weeks, it's going to hurt at times, but it's also going to be good, really good, because along the way we're going to see that we have been given a divine duty to be a blessing and what can happen when we choose a life marked by unity and righteousness over insults and evil.

Read with me:

**1 Peter 3:8** Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For

*"He who would love life  
And see good days,  
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,  
And his lips from speaking deceit.  
11 Let him turn away from evil and do good;  
Let him seek peace and pursue it.  
12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
And His ears are open to their prayers;  
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."*

So, the first thing to notice here is the inclusivity, this is addressed to **all of you**, all of us. We need to know, according to verse 9 that we have been called to be a source of blessing.

Every thinking person must at some point grapple with the basic questions of life and meaning – why am I here? Where did I come from? And, what happens next? Are we the result of billions and billions of years of chance? Did random events and hundreds of

billions of years of evolution just happen to produce a set of molecules that could walk, speak, and think, create art, write code, conduct surgery, and build spacecraft? Am I just a series of electrical signals and chemical responses interacting with my environment that will one day simply die and turn back into mulch and fertilizer?

Am I an accident? A marvelous and mysterious product of an uncaring, uncontrolled, undirected, unthinking universe, or am I something more?

Does my life and this world I live in bear any evidence of intentional design? And if so, who or what is the Creator? And what about my little window of time here on this tiny speck of rock and gas hurtling through space? Does my life matter? Does it have meaning? Does my life have purpose? And if so, what? And why?

The Christian answer is yes. Your life does have meaning, it does have purpose. You were created to know God and enjoy Him forever. And within that context, you are meant to be a Christian Hedonist of the highest degree.

But we are separated from God by sin, our willful, accidental, and even ignorant defiance of His plans for our lives. He says do this, and we do not. He says don't do that, and we do it. And the Bible says almost all of the suffering and pain and difficulty we experience on earth can be traced back to this root cause – we treat others poorly and they treat us the same because we don't love one another, as God commands us to do.

So, God sent His son, Jesus, to show us what love should look like, love for the Father and love for other people. And then, to die a sacrificial death on the cross so that we could be reconciled to the God we have offended and ignored.

So, when you come to Christ and you confess your need for salvation two things happen – the first is marvelous and wonderful – you are forgiven, you are adopted, brought into the family of God, the Bible says you are born-again and you begin to experience a foretaste of heaven. But, the other thing that happens is: you're left here on earth, which is still, at times, a foretaste of hell.

Peter explained it this way in the opening of his letter: He blessed the name of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who [according to His abundant mercy](#), has given us [a living hope](#), through the [resurrection of Jesus Christ](#). He has [given us an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that does not fade away](#). He's [reserving it in heaven for us](#). And Peter says you rejoice over all this.

But, he goes on to say, right now, you're also [grieved by various trials](#). Yes, there is the hope of heaven to come, but there's also the hellish reality of daily life. This is why you can feel both highs and lows depending on your circumstances or your focus in life.

Yes, your purpose is to know God and enjoy Him forever, but you're also supposed to do that beginning here and now, where it can seem really, really, hard to do at times.

So often in church we talk about the need to be saved, and it's in terms of what we're saved from. But Scripture is very clear, we are not only saved *from something*, we are also saved *for something*. You have been saved for a reason – and that reason includes disrupting the propagation of evil in this world. Interrupting the flow of natural consequences. Breaking the expected chain of events, as we read in vs 9, **not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this.**

Peter wants you to **know** this (vs 9). God wants you to know this. I want you to know this. Life is going to be hard; people are going to mistreat you, you will see and experience suffering, pain, and injustice. But God has left you here, like giant boulders in the middle of the stream to disrupt the flow of evil and sin, and at times, to completely dam the river.

So, let's take some time and make note of four things that will be involved in that process. Four things that will be part of fulfilling your mandate to be a blessing

Number One – it will involve unity. **Finally, all of you be of one mind.** Live in harmony.

On the night before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for His disciples – we have that prayer in John chapter 17. Jesus prays directly for disciples, but then He says

**John 17:20** “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; **21 that they all may be one**, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; **that they also may be one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

This is another unrelenting theme of Scripture: Christians are called to unity. We are all adopted into one family, with one Father. We are individual bricks, stacked next to and on top of each other as God builds a single temple out of us. We are different body parts, hands, feet, elbows and ankles, with Christ as the head.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. And the New Testament is full of explanations for how to do that – over sixty verses mention “one another.” We're told to Love one another; honor one another; serve one another; carry each other's burdens; forgive one another; not to give up meeting with one another; confess your sins to one another; pray for one another, and on and on it goes.

God emphasizes unity. Do we? It's an area we have to work on and guard, and right now, it's harder than ever to do because our nation is fracturing and everything that happens “out there” ultimately finds its way in here!

Brothers and sisters, your views on politics and patriotism, COVID, race and social justice, gender identity and sexuality and other cultural hot topics need to be soaked in Scripture, or they will either rip you out of the church or tear the church apart. We must fight to be one, and to be one defined by Christ.

We should be able to find strength and encouragement, compassion and counsel in the church while the world around us falls apart. That's the situation Peter is speaking into.

Remember, these are people who have been [grieved by various trials](#), who live under a hostile government, some of whom were literally servants owned by harsh masters, some of them spouses with unsaved partners. Church was to be a place to find unity – not on the basis of political affiliation, ethnicity, education or profession, but unity in Christ, unity in a common salvation and therefore a common way of seeing the world. [Finally, all of you be of one mind.](#)

Number Two – [having compassion for one another](#). Don't just be together, be sympathetic with each other. Compassion and sympathy are essential to having unity. We have to see and pay attention to each other's hurts, interests, and concerns – we need to be curious and compassionate about the struggles of teens and young adults, Black Americans, Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans, single adults, retirees, those caring for aging parents, and those struggling with same-sex attractions or gender confusion.

Every person in this room is carrying something right now, some weight, some burden, some heaviness in their heart, and they need compassion from the church. But in order to have any to give we have to stop thinking about our own weight or concern for a minute and ask them about theirs. We need to try to understand what it's like to be someone else.

And then, by God's grace and with His help, we need to try to help one another carry those burdens, because your burden is supposed to be my burden, and my burden is supposed to be your burden if we are united in Christ, all of one mind, [having compassion for one another](#).

Number Three - [love as brothers](#) – this is not a romantic, passionate, or emotional love, it's a bond of commitment and concern for each other. A willingness to suffer and sacrifice for each other. But also, just a willingness to work together, serve together, help each other. To care about each other and the common good. For Greek students, it's *phileo*, brotherly, love.

It is tenderhearted and courteous, generous and humble. But here's the problem. It's hard to do and be those things, especially when you have enough issues to worry about on your own. It's really, really, hard to think about what others must be going through when you're going through so much yourself. And so, it's easy to become callous and tribal.

There was a time when people thought technology was going to link us all together into a global village, that communication would bring us together in harmony. Instead, the opposite happened – we're fracturing into demographic clusters of 'people like me,' because it's too hard to process all of your issues and care about all your concerns when I have plenty of my own.

And yet, Christian, we have to. We have to care about the issues affecting our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have to care about the things they care about and either enter into their pain with them if it's a Biblical concern, or help them move out of the junk they're stuck in if it's not.

According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, pity is the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others.

So consider what William Barclay says:

*“Pity is of the very essence of God and compassion is of the very being of Jesus Christ; a pity so great that God sent his only Son to die for men, a compassion so intense that it took Christ to the Cross. There can be no Christianity without compassion.”<sup>1</sup>*

Think about that, “There can be no Christianity without compassion.” First from God to you, and then, in light of that, from you to others. Remember church, we receive, and then reflect. So here’s the answer – here’s how you do this – you start by knowing God knows all your concerns. You take them to Him, talk to Him about them. And then you trust Him to guide you into action or patient, enduring, faith, or a mixture of both. And then, you’re freed up to look out for opportunities to help others.

Think of it like flying, when there’s a loss of oxygen in the cabin you put your mask on first, and then you help others with theirs. So who could you help, care about, or listen to, if you weren’t so worried about yourself?

Now that all sounds great doesn’t it? Helping others. Showing compassion. Being generous. It sounds like a tagline for any generic charity. But here’s where it gets hard, here’s where Peter shuts the escape hatch again – he says do this, even when people aren’t nice to you. **Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.**

You have a divine duty to be a blessing and that will involve Unity, Compassion, Brotherly Love, and now, Absorptive Transformation.

Or, you could just say – Black Panther. Black Panther is one of the superheroes in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and in the movie he wears a special suit made by his super scientist sister Shuri (say that fast ten times) who explains, it’s not just armor, it’s actually able to absorb kinetic energy and store it for later use. So, as the bad guys are shooting him, his suit absorbs the energy from the bullets, stores it, and then he eventually uses that energy to flip their car over. He absorbed all the things meant to harm him and uses it in the pursuit of justice.



It’s not a perfect analogy, you probably don’t want to go around being shot at, or flipping over cars full of bad guys, but it’s helps us think for a minute about the fact that we are called to **love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing.**

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<sup>1</sup> Barclay, 227.

When people treat you poorly, when evil comes your way, or when people say bad things to you or about you, don't throw it right back. And don't simply absorb it or take it. No, you send back something better than what came your way – you reply with a [blessing](#).

Maybe that means you pray for them - honestly, sincerely, not just, “Lord break their teeth or take ‘em out!” You pray that God would heal whatever sort of pain they’re in that would cause them to lash out in the first place, whatever would cause them to say that or do that to you.

Pray and ask God what you can do to be a blessing to them. How can you kill them with kindness - honest, sincere, divinely-inspired, supernaturally-motivated concern?

Now, it's always easier to see things at the extremes, but let's bring this principle into the center of life. How can you go above and beyond in your work or in your home? How can you be a blessing and cause someone else to have an unexpected smile in the middle of their day?

Let me give you some examples. We order a lot of our worship equipment - from instruments to electronics - through a company called Sweetwater. Well, someone there realized with a name like *Sweetwater* you could send your customers some sweets. So, every time we get a shipment from them there are a few small pieces of candy – fireballs, Jolly Ranchers, Peppermints, simple stuff, nothing fancy or expensive, but it's fun, it costs them just a few pennies to do and it makes you smile.

Second, we ordered stickers last summer and the company that sent them out included extras and highlighted it on the packing slip – the number they were supposed to send us and hand-written in pen, the larger number they actually sent us instead. Everybody likes free stuff, especially when it's more of exactly what you ordered.

Third, Madeleine and I refinanced our house last year to take advantage of the low interest rates, and we had a great experience with our broker. But then, a week or so later, we got a small package in the mail – two pounds of coffee from a local roaster in Charlottesville – one of their own choosing and one with a custom label – the Schlenz “house blend.” It was creative, it was unexpected, and even as self-professed coffee snobs who roast our own coffee, it was a blessing.

What could you do for others? What could you sneak into your spouses' lunch or work bag for them to discover later in the day? What could you do for your customers, or co-workers, or employees? What could you do for your friends? Or anyone else for that matter? Where, when, and how could you be a source of unexpected blessing?

Christian, this world is full of hardship, full of frustrations, full of people who are bitter and burned out, how can you respond with the unexpected?

Don't do it on your own. You're not meant to. But look to Jesus, let the Word of God direct you and the Spirit of God enable you. Make yourself increasingly available to God and see what He wants to do.

10 For

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And see good days,  
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12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
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But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."*

Peter quotes here from Psalm 34 giving us additional instruction on how to be the blessing we're called to be.

First, stop contributing to the evil, the darkness, the ugliness and conflict in the world yourself. Stop adding fuel to the fire. Refrain your own tongue from evil. How many times this week have you said something you shouldn't have said? How many times have you spoken something harsh? How many times have you been judgmental or excessively critical? Stop.

Turn away from evil, in both speech and action. But here's the thing – you probably don't think of your words, your thoughts, or your actions as evil, because, they're yours and you're not really a bad person, right? But the Bible uses the word evil nearly 500 times and it has to be talking about someone.

In fact, Jesus said there's evil in all of us:

**Mark 7:22** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

So, pride is evil. Foolishness is evil. Coveting – desperately wanting what someone else has, is evil. Sexual sin is evil. Lying or hiding the truth is evil. This is the kind of stuff we all deal with, and it's the kind of stuff God is trying to work out of us. So, turn from it, put it away.

And instead, do good. Zealously *seek peace and pursue it (vs11)*.

Put off things that lead away from God, and put on better things instead. Actively seek to build good relationships. Actively seek to do people good. Actively seek to make a difference. Jesus said blessed are the peacemakers.

We have a little family vacation coming up next month – a week with the whole extended family. Madeleine and I are already praying for it – anytime you get that many people together there’s a potential for conflict and so we’re already thinking about how can we make peace?

Think about your own life – where are the problems happening now? Where is the potential for future problems at home, at work, in the world? How can you anticipate them and work to cut them off through prayer and action?

How can you take all the time, energy, discussion, thought, and action you put into serving your own interests and put them into serving God and His purposes instead?

Making peace can be harder than waging war, but it produces life and peace and happiness, and it’s your divinely ordained duty – to be a blessing, but only because you’ve already been personally blessed by God.

Yes, there are changes you should make in your life. Yes, you should act and react differently, but only because you know God is aware and engaged with you. Because you now that **His eyes are on the righteous, His ears are open to your prayers, and His face really is against those who do wicked deeds.**

Remember, Peter is writing to people who have been grieved by various trials. People under a difficult government, people with harsh masters, people with unbelieving spouses. And he’s telling them: God knows. He sees. He hears. He will judge.

But all of you: put away evil, don’t respond or retaliate when you’re treated poorly - seek to be a blessing instead, actively, zealously, intentionally. Make peace. Do people good. Wherever you find yourself – in the community, at work, or at home. No matter who is around you. And especially at church – be unified, compassionate, concerned, humble, care about each other like family - **knowing that you were called to this.**

Church, this is our mission. This is why we’re here. This is what God asks of us, and this is what God promises to us.

Let’s pray.



## Application and Discussion Questions

### 1 Peter 3:8-11

#### Be a source of blessing in your relationships

##### Being compassionate

Today, technology enables us to be aware of far more suffering and crises than we can ever respond to. The term “compassion fatigue” was coined in 1992, but it’s not an entirely new concept. Charles Cranfield was a British Chaplain during WWII and later became a professor of theology, he wrote about life in England during the 1940’s: “We got used to hearing on the radio of an air raid involving a thousand bombers as we ate our breakfast. We have got used to the idea of millions of people becoming refugees.”<sup>2</sup> Have you ever felt ‘burned out’ by all the needs you’re aware of? How can you can maintain awareness and still be compassionate as Scripture commands?

Read Philippians 2:1-4. How does this reinforce what we’ve learned about being oriented toward others?

##### Being a blessing

Sweetwater sends candy. Lego gives extra bricks. A mortgage broker sent coffee. Brainstorm some ideas about where and how you could actively pursue peace and be an unexpected blessing to others in your circles of relationship, employment, and service.

Black Panther’s suit absorbs kinetic energy and stores it for later use. Who is your favorite superhero? What super power would you most like to have?

##### Love life and see good days

If you woke up tomorrow and suddenly loved life and felt like you were seeing good days, what would be some of the differences you would notice?

##### Put off and Put on

Read Ps 34, which Peter quotes from in this passage. Which parts are encouraging to you?

##### Watch your mouth

What is one specific area where it is hard for you to “refrain your tongue from evil?” It may be in a particular relationship or a particular reaction. How can you begin to pray for God to help you change? Can you ask someone to pray for you specifically in this area?

Read James 3:2-18 – how does the instruction here about our speech apply to your life?

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Barclay, 227.