

Defending Our Faith

Is that her natural sister?" Jada whispered to Daloris. "Yes," said Daloris. "I grew up around them. I've just gotten used to the passive aggressiveness of Laquitta toward her sister."

"Well, it's not real passive," said Jada. "She considers those jokes?"

"She does," said Daloris.

Serenity has a master's, and Laquitta never went to college. Serenity has accomplished things in the professional world that Laquitta hasn't. Laquitta seems to kick her whenever she can and uses humor to do it. A small crowd was gathered at the home of the sisters' cousin for a party celebrating Serenity's newest self-published book, *Reaching Past the Pain*.

Laquitta had just finished her remarks about her sister's new book—how the book jacket photo would have looked better had she been consulted on the proper attire and color to wear to bring out Serenity's dark skin.

"Thank you, Laquitta," Serenity said, hugging her sister, following the awkward pause in the room. "And thank you to everyone for coming to support me! Please get your fill on our wonderful cuisine, made by our wonderful chef, my beautiful sister, Laquitta. She is a woman of many, many talents. Cooking is only one of them. She prepared our entire spread this afternoon, including our baked treats. Thank you so much, Laquitta!"

1. *Why is it so much easier to repay evil with evil instead of evil with blessing?*

2. *When did you bless someone who did you wrong? What happened?*

3. *Have you been on the receiving end of a kindness when you didn't deserve it? What happened?*

Repaying Evil with Good

1 Peter 3:8-12, KJV

8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

1 Peter 3:8-12, NIV

⁸Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For,

“Whoever would love life and see good days

must keep their tongue from evil

and their lips from deceitful speech.

¹¹They must turn from evil and do good;

they must seek peace and pursue it.

¹²For 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.”

With the word “finally,” Peter began to wrap up the directions he had begun at 1 Peter 2:13. After describing the church as a “spiritual house” (2:5), Peter taught how this “household of faith” should conduct itself. He now ended this section as it had began—with instructions that “all of you” in the church, regardless of social or marital status, could follow: “Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble” (vs. 8). The King James version translated the first instruction even

more vividly: “be of one mind.” This did not mean that everyone should think exactly the same thoughts. Each part of the body would express the mind of Christ in the ways God had gifted them—in loving, compassionate, and humble ways.

Peter then called his readers to something even more difficult: to not “repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing” (vs. 9). After all, Jesus had taught these same things even more explicitly (Matt. 5:38-48). In the midst of opposition and persecution, believers were not to retaliate but to bless, following His example. By doing so, they will “inherit a blessing” of eternal life (vs. 9).

Peter concluded this section of teachings by quoting Psalm 34:12-16. David, too, had preached/sung to the people of Israel to “keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech . . . turn from evil and do good . . . seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:10-11; cf. Ps. 34:13-14). And again, those who did so would enjoy God’s blessings: “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” (1 Pet. 3:12; cf. Ps. 34:15-16). God would see to it that evil was punished and the righteous rewarded. By “repay[ing] evil with blessing,” Peter’s readers affirmed their trust in a righteous, sovereign, and just God to take care of His creation.

4. *What instructions did Peter give the churches in verse 8?*

5. *What harder things did Peter call the churches to do?*

6. *How did Peter use David’s words in Psalm 34 to affirm his message?*

Better to Suffer for Good

1 Peter 3:13-17, KJV

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of

1 Peter 3:13-17, NIV

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do

that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." ¹⁵But in your hearts 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 have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

After instructing his readers on how to live, Peter then shifted his focus to the suffering Christians should expect from living differently—and the blessings that would emerge from doing so despite their present suffering. He began with a seemingly rhetorical question: "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" (vs. 13). While the obvious answer was "no one," Peter understood that the presence of evil in the world didn't guarantee that answer, especially in the times in which he and his readers lived. Therefore, he addressed the possibility of persecution, quoting Isaiah 8:12: "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened'" (vs. 14). God would see to it that any wrongs would ultimately be righted.

Peter then counseled his readers on how to confront evil. Again, they were not to return evil in kind but rather, "in your hearts 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 have.” Bible commentator Warren Wiersbe says, “Our English word *apology* comes from the Greek word translated ‘answer,’ but it does not mean ‘to say I am sorry.’ Rather, it means ‘a defense presented in court.’ ‘Apologetics’ . . . deals with the defense of the faith. Every Christian should be able to give a reasoned defense of his hope in Christ, *especially in hopeless situations*. A crisis creates the opportunity for witness when a believer behaves with faith and hope, because the unbelievers will then sit up and take notice.”

As Christians honor Christ and respond in ways that reflect His love, their nonviolent responses will naturally evoke questions from unbelievers. Therefore, Peter told Christians to be ready to give a response as to why their hope in Christ caused them to react differently. Once more, their answers were to be given “with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience” (vss. 15-16).

By responding in such an unexpected manner, the hope was that “those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (vs. 16)—that they might be shocked out of doing what was “normal” in society and begin to consider the higher ways in which both Christ and Peter called believers to behave. But no matter how others reacted, Peter made it clear that blessing others was the path chosen for believers, even if it meant suffering in return: “For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil” (vs. 17). Even suffering itself was a blessing, if handled in a Christlike manner. Doing good, Peter declared, was always the right choice—no matter what the response.

7. *What did Peter ask his readers—and how did he answer his own question?*

8. *How did Peter tell believers to confront evil?*

9. *What did Peter hope would be the result, if believers followed his instructions?*

Thank You for the Opportunity

Several years ago, I was working for a company in the communications department. Things were going great as the months went on—the company was growing, we were expanding, stocks were increasing. Our department head was given a promotion, which then promoted my manager, who had been wonderful to me.

When these promotions occurred, however, responsibilities changed/shuffled, and I fumbled trying to adjust to the changes and the new system. I did everything I could as well as I could, but my manager became hypercritical of me and micromanaged everything I touched. After one meeting with her where she berated me and told me how much I was disappointing her expectations, I went to the bathroom and cried.

One morning shortly thereafter, I came in ready for our regular meeting and found the HR representative sitting in with my manager. They promptly informed me that I was being dismissed and I should pack up my desk immediately. I was utterly shocked and couldn't even form the words to ask why or what I had done wrong. I choked back tears as I packed my belongings and loaded my car. I was only past my one-year anniversary with the company.

I've only been fired that one time. I wanted to strike back, but I thought about what a Christian should do. After several days, I decided to send my department head a note with a coffee gift card inside, thanking her for the opportunity to learn under her for the past year and wishing their company success. I don't know how she reacted, but I know I repaid a bad situation with a blessing.

10. *What is your typical reaction when someone hurts or betrays you?*

11. *How do you respond to “keyboard warriors” and other strangers who mock or disparage you from a distance?*

12. *What is an example of taking the high road in your own life?*

What Might Have Been

The world is not good at turning the other cheek but instead says to get even or get revenge. How might our world look if we made the godly choice instead of the human one?

► *What would the world look like if we all reacted with kindness instead of revenge when we're wronged? What are you doing to contribute to this ideal in your own life?*

KEY VERSE

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. —1 Peter 3:17, KJV

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. —1 Peter 3:17, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 18 through March 24

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 28:1-14—Blessings of Walking in God's Ways.
- Tues.** Titus 2:1-8—Let Your Life Match Your Words.
- Wed.** Proverbs 1:1-9—Fear God and Gain Knowledge.
- Thurs.** 1 Corinthians 5:1-11—Refrain from Defiling the Church.
- Fri.** 2 Timothy 2:8-21—Vessels Prepared for Every Good Work.
- Sat.** Acts 6:1-6—The Ministry of Caring for Others.
- Sun.** Acts 6:7-15—A Spirit-Empowered Witness.