

Do Good for God's Sake: Relationships

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[0 : 00] Well, when my wife Michelle and I were dating, she left me actually and went overseas for three months.

I don't think it was to get a break from me, but I was quite nervous because often when people go overseas, she went backpacking, exploring Europe for three months. You never know if when they come back, they'll, well, in this case, want to put up with little old me.

And so I was quite nervous, but I had a plan. I knew she was a bit of a romantic, and so I got a piece of red velvet. I rolled it up and put it just inside the passenger side door of the car.

So when I went to the airport to pick her up, I would open the door and the red velvet would roll out like a red carpet. And so the day came, I went, and it worked.

It was brilliant. It's pretty good, huh? She loved it. The door opened, the red velvet rolled out like a red carpet. Her heart melted. It was beautiful.

[1 : 07] The point here is I did good for once in my relationship, though I must admit it wasn't just for her sake. It was for mine as well. And this morning, we're thinking about doing good in our various relationships.

Ultimately, for God's sake, but also for ours. And so the theme continues really from last week.

And so you might remember on your screens the heading verses from chapter 2, which are really a heading for this whole section in 1 Peter, which probably runs to the end of chapter 4, verse 19.

And here we see that as foreigners or exiled strangers, tourists, I said last week, are we to live such standout good lives among the pagans that though they accuse us of doing wrong, they may see our good deeds and glorify God.

In other words, we're to do good for God's sake. And we saw last week, one of the ways of doing good was to submit to authorities who have authority over us.

[2 : 22] To submit means to obey or to follow their lead. And we're to submit even if they don't always use their authority in a way we like. And so we saw that we're to submit to workplace authorities, even when the boss is sometimes harsh.

And we're to submit to the state authorities, even if we don't like wearing masks. Although I got a nice surprise in the mail this week, which I'll tell you about a little bit later on.

But for us today, this week, we move from those formal structures of state and workplace authorities to personal relationships of marriage and one another.

And we're to do good in these relationships. And not just for God's sake, ultimately we're to do it for God's sake, but as we'll see also for ours. But as we begin, we meet one more example of the dreaded S word, submit.

And I call it the S word because in the context of marriage, it is like a swear word in our society. In fact, swearing is better than wives submitting for our world, isn't it?

- [3 : 37] And I'm guessing even as Grace read verse one today in our reading, there would have been some sort of reaction from you. Perhaps from Ray's eyebrows to, oh, here we go.
- I wonder what he's going to do with this to thinking, oh, poor guy. Actually, that was my reaction because I'm a bit nervous. And so it's tempting to skip over this bit and go straight to verses eight to 12, not just because of our society, but because it might not directly apply to us.
- And yet, as God's word, it's still worth spending some time thinking about it so that we can present a right understanding to our society.
- And because we all know people who are married, whether kids or grandkids, nieces, nephews, friends. And so we can pray for them and encourage them according to God's word.
- But because it is sensitive, we'll need to spend some time carefully unpacking it. And so point one on your screens will be the longest by far.
- [4 : 46] But do stick with me, starting with verse one in your Bibles. Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husband so that if any one of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.
- And so here the situation is one where the wife has become a Christian, but the husband has not yet. Now, for anyone to become a Christian, they must hear the word or the good news about Jesus.
- But it seems in this case, the husband has already heard it. It's just verse one that he does not believe the word yet. And so the wife's evangelistic strategy is not to keep using the words, the Bible verses and so on, but to use her life.
- I heard another minister tell about a wife who was so keen for her husband to become a Christian, which is a good thing. But she was so keen that she would stick Bible verses on the vanity mirror so that whenever he was shaving, he'd see the verses.
- And she'd put evangelistic tracks in his briefcase for some lunchtime reading. In fact, one year, she even iced a Bible verse onto his birthday cake.
- [6 : 13] But Peter says here you don't need to do that. He's heard the word about Jesus. So instead, do good by submitting.
- Then when he sees your purity, that is your pure or good conduct. And when he sees your reverence, it's not for him, by the way, the word is literally fear.
- When he sees your fear for God, because you're doing it for God's sake, he might be won over. Here is doing good by submitting for God's sake, out of reverence for God.
- And so your non-Christian husband might glorify God, be won over. Now, I've seen this work and not always, sadly, but I have seen it work where the wife's godly and good conduct has led her non-Christian husband to Christ.
- But this submission is not just for wives who have non-Christian husbands, because verses five to six speak of wives submitting to their Christian husbands, like Sarah did to Abraham.
- [7 : 24] In fact, it says there that Sarah even called Abraham her Lord. And so if you weren't feeling uncomfortable already, you might be feeling it now.
- Although I can imagine some of the men at our church thinking, oh, that sounds good. You can call me Lord. But I want to suggest that they and our world have misunderstood what all this means.
- So given this is going out onto the Internet, let me talk about both wives and husbands, having a bit of a side and talk about how submission is supposed to work.

Starting with what it does not mean. So submission does not mean that wives are less worth less than husbands.

We have equal worth, as we'll see in verse seven. And it does not mean that wives are less intelligent than husbands. In fact, it's often the other way around.

[8 : 27] And certainly in my marriage, my wife did a lot better at school and university than I did. And it does not mean wives are doormats who never have a say or can never make a decision.

It doesn't mean that because often it's the wife who knows what's going on and can make the decision. Rather, it's about having different roles to play or jobs in the marriage.

I'm not talking in terms of who cooks dinner and who controls the remote or how husbands drive the car and the wife reads the map. They are kind of little j jobs.

And we're free to do whatever we like, whatever makes the marriage work. Now, I'm talking about the capital J job that God has given husbands.

The husband's job is to love and serve his wife for her good. Not his. That's the job that God will hold every husband accountable for.

[9 : 33] But like at work, if you're given a job to do, you need authority to do it, don't you? Well, so too in marriage. And so the wife submits to her husband's authority so that he can do his job of working for her good.

And then she can submit and enjoy that good. And we get a glimpse of this even in the idea. So we get a glimpse of this idea even with state authorities.

They have authority over us to serve for our good, don't they? I mean, just think about the title, prime minister. It literally means first servant. And so Scott Morrison's job is to serve us for our good.

For example, he says, don't travel overseas to keep safe from COVID. And then we submit so that we are kept safe from COVID.

And we see this with Christ and the church, like on the next slide. Where wives and husbands are to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church.

[10 : 41] You see, Jesus, his job was to serve us by giving up his life at the cross, as you can see in yellow there on the screen. He loved us and gave himself up for us to pay for our sins and to make us his holy people.

And we submit to Christ to enjoy that good as his holy people. Well, so too in marriage. The husband is to lay down his life for his wife.

He's willing to even die for her good, her spiritual good, her physical, emotional and mental good.

And if someone is willing to do all that for you, then perhaps submitting isn't as bad as the world thinks. So to get practical, it means a husband saying to his wife, leave all that, I'll clean up, you have a break.

And the wife going, okay. Serving, submitting. Or it might mean the husband coming home from work and instead of disappearing to his man cave, whether that be his study or room or shed out the back to, you know, do a project or watch TV or read a book or whatever it is.

[12 : 03] Instead of disappearing to do that, he comes in and says, what can I do to help? And then the wife submits by then telling him what to do to help.

You see, it's about the husband being a servant leader like Christ, using his authority to serve for his wife's good.

And the wife submits so that she can enjoy that good. The difficulty, of course, is when the husband isn't doing his job. Like in this case, in our passage, when he's not even a Christian.

When he doesn't even believe it is his job. Yet like last week, where we are still to submit to state authorities or workplace authorities, even when they are unjust.

Well, so too wives when husbands are hopeless. But I hasten to add, there are limits to this. If the husband says to do something that is against God, then again, like last week on your screens, we must obey God rather than them.

[13 : 19] And if the husband is abusive, then can I say you get out. You leave and get help. Both for you and for him.

Sadly, some Christians in the past have wrongly used this teaching in the Bible to say that wives must put up with domestic violence and abuse.

No, that is wrong. That's not what the Bible is saying. And if you're in a situation like this, and perhaps it might be exacerbated with this lockdown and more time spent at home on top of each other, then please ask for help.

Contact me or contact the authorities. As we saw last week on your screens, that the governors and other authorities are sent to punish those who do wrong.

And to commend and even protect those who do right. But we do live in a fallen world where we all, everyone from time to time, gets grumpy or we lose our temper or we make an unwise decision.

[14 : 38] And when that happens, so I'm not talking about abuse or that sort of thing. This is just the ordinary part of life. When that happens, even then, wives are still to have a gentle spirit.

That supports and submits to him. You see verse three to six. Verse three. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.

Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves by submitting themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her Lord.

You are her daughters if you do what is good and do not give way to fear. Now, the Bible here is not saying that women cannot wear jewelry or do their hair.

Rather, it's saying your true beauty doesn't come from those things. It doesn't come from your outward appearance. It's not determined by that. Rather, your true beauty is determined by your inner self, your heart attitude.

[15 : 56] That's what is of great value in God's sight. And being gentle and quiet doesn't mean you have to speak softly or you can't question or you can't be a strong, independent woman, so to speak.

Rather, it's about having an attitude where you're willing, verse six, to do what is right or literally good. By submitting to your own husband and not fearing what will happen if you do.

Because verse two, remember your reverence for God is what matters more. Or as we'll see next week, Christ is still our Lord. My old Bible study leaders were a couple where the wife was quite loud in a jovial kind of way.

And she was a very strong and capable woman as well. He wasn't, he was quite clever as well, but didn't have a great deal of common sense. And I was at their place for lunch one time and an issue came up, which was over the car, I think, from memory.

And her husband, I think, was wanting to sell it. But she said, we can do that. But do you really think it's the best thing to do? What about dot, dot, dot? And she listed all these other reasons.

[17 : 08] You see, she gently pushed back. And yet she was still willing to submit for God's sake. But because the husband knows she's a strong and capable woman and that she often has more common sense than he does, then he listened to her and said, oh, yeah, actually, that's a good idea.

We'll do that. This is the kind of gentle and quiet spirit that is of great value in God's sight. One which is willing to submit for God's sake and let the husband do his job.

Even when you can do it better or even when sometimes he gets it wrong. And husbands, well, we're to do good by laying down our lives, as we saw in Ephesians, or here, verse 7, by being considerate.

Do you see verse 7? Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

And now here, husbands get just one verse while the wives get lots. Is this because Peter needs to keep it simple for us blokes or because wives need more instruction?

[18 : 27] Of course not. Remember, he's been dealing with or focusing on submitting to authorities, whether state, workplace or marriage.

But unlike the other groups, he cannot speak to wives without addressing husbands. And so husbands, in the same way as Christ, we are to do good for God's sake, even when it's hard.

The husband is to do good by being considerate of our wives or literally living with knowledge of our wives. You know, listening to them and knowing what they like and don't like.

Not so we can push their buttons, you know, leave our clothes all over the floor or whatever annoys them. But so that we know how best to serve them for their good.

Like my old Bible study leader who knows his wife is capable and actually likes to run the house. So she does. Not because the husband is lazy, but because he knows she wants to.

[19 : 34] But if something goes pear-shaped, he can't then turn around and say, oh, I shouldn't have listened to you or it's your fault. No, no. It's his responsibility. His job.

Or like a friend of mine who knows his wife is not a morning person. And so on the weekends, he will take the kids out for a walk or play in the park so that she can have a sleep in.

Or more recently, another guy who's been working hard on Sunday mornings to set up online church and get breakfast ready for the kids to make life easier for his wife and the family.

Because he knows online church is sometimes difficult. But he knows also that it's for the good of his wife and family. So he'll pull out all the stops.

He knows it's his job. The point is we're to consider or know what helps our wives and then do it for their good. Even if we're tired or even if we prefer not to.

[20 : 34] And what's more, husbands are also to treat our wives with respect or literally honor. The reference to weaker partner here in verse 7 refers to weaker physical strength.

In fact, the word for partner is literally vessel. You know, our outer body, if you like. Men are generally physically stronger than women, generally. It's why there are men's and women's events at the Olympics.

So it's fair. And sadly, why wives are often the victims of domestic violence. There are biological differences between men and women.

I mean, it's how kids are born, right? But husbands are not to abuse that difference, but honor our wives as equals. Because, verse 7, women are heirs with men.

Literally, co-heirs of life eternal. Remember in the ancient world, it was only the firstborn male who got the inheritance, who was the heir.

[21 : 40] In fact, I think it's still like that with the British aristocracy. But Peter says, no, no, women are actually equal heirs, co-heirs with men.

And this would have been revolutionary in Peter's day. But the point is, it means husbands and wives are of equal worth. We may be biologically different, with different roles in marriage, but we have equal worth and equal inheritance in God's family.

This is something our world doesn't seem to get. Because our world ties our worth to our role or job, doesn't it? I mean, despite the politically correct rhetoric of our society, people judge us by what we do.

I mean, when someone meets you, what's one of the first questions they ask you? What do you do for work? Isn't it one of the questions they often ask? And our answer often shapes what they think of us.

Oh, you're a doctor. Oh, wow. You're a church minister. Oh, excuse me, I need to go to the bathroom. In fact, that's actually happened to me, for real. But no matter what job or role we have in society or in marriage, we have equal worth before God.

[23 : 04] And so husbands, we ought to treat our wives with honor and equal worth, both for God's sake and ours, actually. Because did you notice how seriously God takes our job of honoring them?

You see verse 7 again? He says, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. In other words, if we mistreat our wives, if we don't love and lay down our lives for them, God won't hear our prayers.

Except the prayer for forgiveness, of course. But that's how seriously God takes our job of serving our wives for their good.

And so we're to do good for God's sake and ours. Now, we don't have time to cover every scenario like, you know, those sad cases where a spouse is incapacitated because of health issues and so on.

If you have questions or even disagreements, please email me. I'd love to talk to you about those sorts of things. But for now, can I ask those who are married?

[24 : 12] Do we do such good towards our spouse? And if we're not married, do we encourage and pray for such good to those we know who are married?

Well, we need to move on more briefly, much more briefly, you'll be pleased to know. Point two, we're also to do good in our relationships with one another. Have a look at verse eight. Finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble, he says.

Now, here the language is probably to do with relationships in the church. The language of one another almost always refers to fellow Christians.

And I think verse eight, it's just one verse. And I think it's pretty self-explanatory, isn't it? And so can I ask, how are you going at being loving to those who annoy you on Zoom?

Or being patient with those in your household? Or being humble when you know you're right? How are we going with that at the moment? And for the most part, can I say how encouraged I've been to hear people show compassion and love towards one another at COVID, both at St. John's and at HTD.

[25 : 30] I know of one family who made a card with their daughter and sent it to another family to say, we missed you and are thinking of you, which is lovely, isn't it? I know other people who are ringing others on just to see how they're going, sending birthday cards, dropping off food and meals and the like.

That's all happening, which is brilliant. In fact, I mentioned masks last Sunday and that I hate wearing masks. And so this week, two people actually sent me some masks that they made.

So let me show you. Here they are. I got these two nice fabric masks. So thank you, Joy McGrath and Anne and Liz Bolton. They're so nice and soft, so much better than the other masks.

Thank you. It's terrific. And I know others who are showing love by donating money to help people in need. This is how we're to do good to one another inside the church.

And thank you for doing it. And so the question then becomes on your screens, will you continue to do such good towards one another?

[26 : 42] And to those outside the church, well, point three, verse nine. Do 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.

Here, I think it's referring to outsiders, because they are generally the ones who were insulting or accusing Christians.

So do you remember on your screens there, that heading verse? It was the pagans, the non-Christians who accuse Christians. And so I assume that's who's on view here.

But whoever it is, really, it doesn't matter. We are to do good by blessing and not repaying insult with insult or evil with evil, which is hard to do, isn't it?

You know, when someone does something to us, our natural reaction is to do something back, even if it's behind their back. You know, insult that boss who was rude.

[27 : 49] Post a mean comment on Facebook to that person who was rude to you. Give a rude gesture to someone who cuts you off on the road, whatever it is.

But we're not to give in to that temptation, but we're to do good by blessing. Blessing others with forgiveness, rather than repaying with vengeance.

Why? Well, verse 9 says, because this is the life we were called to live. For God's sake, in other words. But not just for God's sake, but ours too.

Because verse 9 also says that we may inherit a blessing. But what blessing? Well, it could be life eternal in the new creation, where we'll have every physical blessing.

The word inherit reminds us of verse 7, where men and women are equal heirs, who will inherit the gracious gift of life eternal.

[28 : 48] And so the idea would be to do good, even despite insults, so that our faith might be proved genuine, and result enjoying the blessing of life eternal.

But I think Peter suggests that we'll also inherit a blessing now too. Because look at verse 10. He goes on to say, for, because, whoever would love life and see good days, must keep his 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. Here the blessing seems to be loving life, having contentment, if you like, and seeing good days, experiencing enjoyment.

Also, verse 12, having God attentive to our prayers, which brings us comfort. This seems to be the blessing on view. Now, it doesn't mean life will suddenly be easy all the time.

[30 : 02] In fact, the title of this psalm on your screens tells us it was by David, King David, who was fleeing from his life and had to pretend to be insane to get away from a king.

So life will not always be easy, no. Nor does it mean if we do good, God will always answer our prayers to win lotto or whatever we want, whenever we want.

God always answers our prayers. In his time for our Christian good. But it does mean if we live God's way, if we do good by blessing with forgiveness rather than repaying with vengeance, then we will see more good days than we would otherwise.

As Peter says in verse 13, who is going to harm us if we're eager to do good? And that makes sense, doesn't it? If we do good, we are more likely to see good days.

But if we repay with revenge, then it often just escalates, doesn't it? It creates enemies and tension and bitterness and sucks the enjoyment out of our days, doesn't it?

[31 : 18] I have two brothers and one sister and our sister is the youngest. And I remember one time when we were about 10 or 12, she wanted us boys to leave the lounge room so she could have it to herself.

And to get us out, she pretended to cry. And my father ran into the lounge room and immediately told us to go to our rooms without listening to our side of the story.

And as we left, I turned back and saw my sister give this devious smile. I've got them. And it boiled my blood.

I was furious. And so instead of doing a Frozen, you know that movie, this on your screens there, that kids movie Frozen, they sing that song, you know, let it go, let it go.

I'm not going to sing it for you. Instead of letting it go and forgiving, I got revenge. I paid back. And so later that night before bed, I got the cord of my dressing gown, tied it around her favorite teddy, and then actually hung it from the light like that.

[32 : 30] It's terrible, I know. It's terrible. And revenge may have felt sweet, but it was only for a moment. Because what do you think happened next?

Yeah, I got in trouble. Lots of trouble. And so instead of just doing a Frozen, you know, letting it go and forgetting, instead of getting on with my life and seeing good days, I took revenge and saw bad days for the next two weeks.

Grounded. No dessert. You see, God's way actually works. If we repay with revenge, then it escalates and creates enemies with our colleagues or neighbors or one another.

It can make us bitter inside or get us in more trouble. Or like the husbands in verse 7, can hinder our prayers from being heard. And so we had to do good by blessing with forgiveness, not repaying with vengeance.

Or put differently on the screens there, will we frozen it and forgive, let it go and forgive? For God's sake, who called us and for our sake that we might see good days rather than bitter ones.

[33 : 53] But what happens if we do such good but still suffer? Well, that's next week. This week, we're seeing that in our relationships, we are to do good both for God's sake and ours.

So let's pray we would. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for this passage even though it contains some very difficult bits for us to hear.

Help us, we pray, to understand it rightly and to live it out in a godly way that we might be people who do good for your sake and ours.

Such good that people might see and turn to you to glorify your name. Father, we pray also for those amongst us who have non-Christian spouses.

Please, we pray, would you have mercy on them and bring them to Christ. And we pray also for those who have lost their spouses. May you continue to comfort them with the knowledge that they will see them again on that great and glorious last day.

[35 : 02] We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.