

## ***“Maintaining Holy Relationships” Part 3***

### **Holiness**

1 Peter 3:8-12

**Dr. Bruce Bickel**

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**Bruce:** Good morning, men.

**Men:** Good morning.

**Bruce:** Before we have a moment of silence and just prepare our hearts for the Lord, go and listen to Mark tomorrow. He’s got a lot to tell you about what’s going on at Pitt. Some exciting things are going on in the athletic department, and so I encourage you to come out and here Mark tomorrow because you’ll learned something about what’s going on on our campuses and you’ll be very encouraged about what’s going on. So Mark, we’re glad you’ll be with us, buddy. Thanks. Don, set the tone for us. Let’s just be quiet and know that He is God. (*Music.*)

Indeed, gracious heavenly Father, we stand on the promises of Your word. We come this morning trusting that You would free us from all the frustration and consternation of this week, that Your Holy Spirit would be among us and would be our Teacher. Guide us into all truth, and open our eyes that we might behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. Amen and amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** The last several weeks Peter has been instructing us on the value of holy relationships and the critical impact that it has upon the world, starting with ourselves. So I call your attention to the words under consideration found in 1 Peter chapter 2 beginning at verses 8-12. I’d like to read it again. And hopefully with the Lord’s grace today, we’ll finish up this particular portion and move on.

But this has been a critical section for us, dealing with the importance of holy relationships. Let’s listen to the word of the Lord, beginning at chapter 3, verse 8 of 1 Peter.

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling. But on the contrary bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and amen. Peter has been teaching us about the significance of holy relationships. If you look at our passage, I want you to understand, men, how this is so sovereignly and divinely put together. These are not just random words put together in an unorganized fashion. There is a methodology of the Holy Spirit that always says that doctrine precedes practice. So you begin to see some doctrine in this particular passage, but then you begin to see some personal applications which we’ll get into today.

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But the two major insights and the two major principles that Peter gives us in this particular passage in these verses, the first one is this. Love one another. And the second principle is this. Love life.

Now notice. He’s saying this. If you don’t learn how to love one another you’re not going to love life. And so these words are not randomly put together. The reason that he instructs us to love life after he tells us to love one another is because of the importance of holy relationships.

Now notice the sequence. Look at verses 8 and 9. As we talked the last couple of weeks, he gives us attitudes with insiders and actions with outsiders.

The attitudes with insiders would be how is it that you and I are to have the right attitudes toward people who are members of the family of God. That’s who I’m calling the insiders. And then he says that there are certain actions you have with outsiders, those people who would not be in the family of God.

Now notice inverses 8 and 9 the five attitudes he says we need to have to establish holy relationships before we can enjoy and love life. With insiders they are these. You have harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion and humility. He says that these are the attitudes you need to maintain with people who are in the body of Christ. Those are the attitudes we have with insiders.

And then next, he says that here are the actions you must have with outsiders. You and I practice these five attitudes on insiders, people inside the body of Christ, so that we know how to respond to the outsiders, those who are not part of the body of Christ. You see the logic of this? You always deal with yourself before you deal with others. And he’s saying that you need to learn how to deal with each other in the body of Christ before you deal with people outside the body of Christ.

So you and I practice these five attitudes of harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion and humility. He says that the next thing that you need to do is to have certain actions based upon those five attitudes that you’ve learned inside to take them to the outside world, to the non-believing people.

And he basically says this. Your actions are twofold. Don’t overlook evil. Overcome evil. You don’t overlook it. You overcome it. But notice how he says that you overcome it. You overcome it with good deeds. You overcome it with good works. So when you and I see evil in the world, you and I are not to be frustrated by it. You and I are to think, “This is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the fact that we understand the need for holy relationships, and we’re going to respond to the evil that we see and we’re going to give it good works.

It’s what I call replacement therapy. You see some action that is evil and you replace it with an act of good works.

Now you can’t do that, friends, unless you really understand how to love one another. Until you and I practice these five attitudes on insiders, we’re not going to be able to have these two actions toward outsiders.

So he says that when dealing with non-Christian people and the world system, you don’t overlook evil. You overcome it. And the way you overcome it is with good deeds.

Now who is the overcomer?

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**Participant:** Christ.

**Bruce:** You and I are. Because Christ is the overcomer, and we overcome the system of the world. Christ says this. “I have overcome the world.” What does that mean that you are?

**Participant:** An overcomer.

**Bruce:** That you’re an overcomer! You and I don’t need to be controlled by the evil of this world. You and I are over-comers because we are in Christ.

And then notice the next thing that he teaches us. As a result of loving one another, learning how to respond to insiders and outsiders, he says that the next thing you’ll do is learn how to love life. Notice verses 10-12. I want you to see that now he says, in effect, “I gave you the doctrine of holy relationships.” Now here is how you put practical application in the next verses. Look at verses 10-12.

What does he tell us? He says that the person who loves life, first of all, does three things. Control the tongue! If you love life, control your mouth! Control your tongue.

Secondly, to love life, you hate evil and do good. When you see evil you do good. That’s how you love life because you don’t let evil control you. You actually control life because you are in the responsible position of replacing that evil with an act of goodness.

And thirdly, he says this. Pursue peace. So Peter’s instruction to us is really quite profound. If you’re going to love life, first of all you’ve got to control your tongue. If you’re going to love life, you’ve got to replace evil with acts of goodness through God’s grace. And if you love life, you’ve got to seek peace. So let’s examine this, what Peter teaches us in these particular verses.

Now first of all, Peter quotes Psalm 34 verse 12 in the beginning of verse 10. He basically says this. He describes, simply, the man who desires a long life and desires a good life. If you really desire a long and a good life, he says to do three things. Control your tongue. Watch what you say. Replace evil with good, and pursue peace. If you want a long, enjoyable, peaceful life, those are the three things that we do.

Peter describes the person who wishes to live a life which he can love, finding a worthwhile life—not a life that is marked by endless frustration or boredom, but by love. You love life. Life is a gift.

We need to realize this, friends. You and I are not here to stay. You and I are here to go.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** You and I are not here to get. You and I are here to—

**Men:** Give.

**Bruce:** You see, this is what Peter is saying. Do you understand this? You’re not here to stay. You’re here to go. The first breath you and I had was a step closer to eternity.

And he says that you and I need to understand how to love life. And to love life is based upon the maintaining of holy relationships. The degree to which you and I maintain holy relationships inside the body of Christ and outside the body of Christ is going to affect the way in which you love life. If you love life, then do these three things.

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Here is your responsibility. Control your tongue. Replace evil with good. And pursue peace.

Let’s talk about what it means to control your tongue. There are three choices concerning life, three options. First of all, we can decide to endure life and view it as a burden. Woe is me! You view life and just endure it and make it a burden.

Secondly, you can decide to escape life as though you are running away from a battle. You can decide to escape life as though you are running from a war or a battle.

And thirdly, Peter says this. The third option is this. You can decide to enjoy life because we know this, that God is in control. “Thanks be to God who always,” always, always “leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and spreads through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him.”

Who is in control of your life? You see, if you really understand who is in control of your life, you’re not going to run away from life. You’re not going to see it as a burden. You’re going to see it as a joy, as a gift. And you realize this. The thing that I need to do to enhance my life and my enjoyment is to do this. I need to do three things. I need to control my tongue. I need to replace evil with good. And, if at all possible, I need to live at peace with all people. And so we pursue peace.

So Peter offers very different counsel than the system of this world would say because you don’t run away from it. You don’t view it as a burden. You overcome it because you love life and because you’re basically saying this. I love life and God is in control.

Well, let’s take a look at the first thing he says to do if you’re going to love life. You’ve got to control your tongue. Peter teaches us that God will exhibit special care and providence upon those people who do three things—control their tongues, replace evil with good, and pursue peace.

So how do we enjoy life? First of all, let’s learn how to control our tongues. What does that mean in verse 10?

You’ll notice that he says that there are two kinds of words that you and I need to control, to be given up. And those are two things—those words that are evil—the word would be malicious—and those that are calculated to harm. Give up those words that you know are calculated to harm because they are malicious and they are evil. That’s not a reflection of who you and I are in maintaining holy relationships. You give those up because you know this. I want to love life! And the degree to which I’m going to love life is directly related to the degree that I have holy relationships.

So the first thing you do to preserve those holy relationships inside and outside the body of Christ is by giving up those words that are designed to harm. You give them up.

Notice Proverbs 18:21. “The tongue has the power of life and death.” Boy, I’ve seen so many people murder people slowly, systematically by their tongues. They just do that. Peter says, “Don’t do that!” If you really want to enjoy life, friends, life is a gift. Watch how you talk to people, both inside and out. Give up those words that are designed to harm, because the tongue has the power of life and death. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Yes. In James it says that “the tongue is a fire, full of iniquity.”

**Bruce:** Absolutely.

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**Don:** “The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by hell.” Whew!

**Bruce:** It’s like lighting a flame in a box of firewood. It just inflames the rest of your whole emotional system.

Let me give you some indications of some of the Scripture references to what words we need to give up under the classification of evil. These are evil words which the Scripture says you need to give up because they’re designed to do one thing and that is to what? Harm. Give them up!

I’ll give you some references. First of all, give up *vain* words—Job 16 verse 3. Give up *irritating* words, words that irritate people. You’re not going to maintain holy relationships by irritating people. That’s Proverbs 15 verse 1.

Give up *hasty* words. You just let it fly off emotionally. Give them up! Think before you talk. That would be Proverbs 29 verse 20.

How about giving up *irreverent* words, irreverent words that are not respectful to the person to whom you are speaking? Malachi 3:13. How about giving up *enticing* words that entice people to harm. Colossians 2:4.

How about giving up *flattering* words, words that flatter that can sometimes be harmful? 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 5. How about *insincere* words? 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 3.

Another description for the Biblical terminology for evil words we are to give up would be *proud* words, words that set yourself up to be proud and impact your own life because these words are designed to harm somebody else because you’re speaking of your own pride. 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 18. And then lastly, in 3 John verse 10, *malicious* words.

Now Peter is saying this. Many of you really want to enjoy life. The first thing you’ve got to do is this. You’ve got to realize the value of the weapon that you have in your tongue. And if you want to preserve holy relationships both inside the body of Christ and outside the body of Christ, with the insiders and the outsiders, the first thing we’ve got to do applicationally, as an expression of our loving one another, is to control your tongue! Give up these words that are designed to harm—vain words, irritating words, hasty words, irreverent words, enticing words, flattering words, insincere words, proud words and malicious words. Give them up, because you won’t enjoy life and it’s going to cause you more problems than blessings.

So who controls the quality of your life? You do! I do! And part of that qualifying my life and maintaining it is just how I control my tongue.

So the first type of words he says we are to give up are those words which are designed to harm. Those are what we would call evil words. The next thing he says, the other kinds of words that we are to give up are, notice, in verse 10. “Let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.” We need to give up deceitful words. Those are calculated to mislead. Give up those words that are calculated to mislead just as much as you give up those words that are designed to be harmful.

Notice Proverbs 15 verse 4. “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” Men, give up evil words. Give up deceitful words.

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That’s how you’re going to begin to enjoy life, because what you’re going to do is to maintain the value and significance of holy relationships.

You see, the nonbeliever can’t do what we’re talking about because they have no natural inclination within their own human nature to do that. Until their human nature is regenerated and changed by the grace of God, what I just said is an impossibility. It’s a pure function of grace. It’s something that only we can do. We don’t say that proudly. We say that humbly because we realize that if it weren’t for the grace of God I would be speaking evil and deceitful words all the time. Yes, please?

**Participant:** The unbeliever can’t do that. We have to understand not only can they not do that, but they’re not ever capable and so you can’t expect it.

**Bruce:** Hey, that’s a great point. Sometimes, friends, you just have to realize that that’s all they can do! They can’t do anything else! Remove those expectations that they think the way that you think. Unless something happens to them in their regeneration, they’re not going to be able to do that. They can’t do it! Their nature does not permit them. So you’ve got to realize and don’t put the expectation that they act like you and I do. That’s when you and I do not overlook their evil. We overcome their evil by giving up harmful and deceitful words. We don’t do that. Yes, Bob?

**Bob:** Bruce, when we talk about controlling the tongue, speak to us just a moment about Matthew 12:34. It says, “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”

**Bruce:** Oh, excellent! “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” Do you know that one of the greatest barometers of your spiritual maturity is the words you use?

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** It’s what you talk about. Why did you say that? What were your thoughts? Sometimes you have to say, “Lord, keep my mouth shut.” I’ve told you that my life’s verse is Exodus 14:14. (*Laughter.*) I will fight for you when you keep your mouth shut. (*Laughter.*) Well, that’s my version. It basically says this. “I will fight for you when you remain silent.”

Now that has gotten me out of more jams than anything I know in recent years. (*Laughter.*) Sometimes my best response is .... (*Bruce puts his hand over his mouth.*)

Let me give you an illustration of this. You know my background, and you’ve been involved with me over the years with the little orphanage we started in Viet Nam. I noticed that there was this one little boy who became a possessor of saving faith through God’s grace. God was pleased to regenerate him. Do you know the first thing I saw in his life that was cleaned up? His mouth.

**Participant:** Mm!

**Bruce:** He quit cussing. He learned all the cuss words from the Naval officers and the people in the Marines that he’d hang around with, and the Army guys. He learned all that profanity from Americans. When he became regenerate as a twelve year old boy, the first thing that happened to him was that he quit cussing. And he quit giving us the finger. (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** Wow!

**Bruce:** And there is something else he did. I’m going to show you what else he did. This is the American version. This is the Vietnamese version. (*The finger.*)

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**Participant:** Of what?

**Participant:** The little finger.

**Participant:** Okay.

**Bruce:** Don, when you transcribe this you’ll have to be creative. (*Laughter.*)

**Don:** Okay.

**Bruce:** This is the sign of a woman’s vagina, opening like that. Rather than giving you the finger, they’d go like this. And that means basically that you’re a (*crude expression.*) Now he stopped doing that when God was pleased to grant him saving faith because something happened. His nature changed. All of a sudden he didn’t want to do this. He didn’t want to do that. (*Obscene gestures.*) He watched his tongue, a twelve-year-old boy!

**Participant:** That’s amazing!

**Bruce:** It radically changed his life because he quit doing that stuff. He just didn’t want to do it anymore because he knew that something happened in his life to change the whole direction of his life. And the first thing that he began to do was to control his tongue.

Men, if you want to have good relationships and enjoy life, give up words that are harmful. Give up words that are deceitful.

I think that it’s very important that we understand that we cannot expect the non-believing world to understand what we’re talking about. So we cannot have the expectation that they talk like we do. And when they talk like that, what do we do? Overcome it with—

**Participant:** Good.

**Bruce:** Overcome it with goodness! It’s time to demonstrate some goodness. When somebody talks like that, figure out a way to do something good for them. God sovereignly uses different situations in our lives to share the gospel of Christ by how we control our tongues.

Let me give you some applications about this. So how do we control our tongues? First I would offer this for your consideration. Count God’s mercies to you instead of the verbal miseries that people give you. You’ve got to think right and act right before you feel right.

When somebody comes at you with a verbal harangue, just ward that off and think of God’s mercies to you. Don’t give them back what they stimulate within you. You overcome their evil which is intended to harm, you overcome that with good. And the only way you can do that, brothers, is if you’re very cognizant, very much aware of God’s mercies to you, as opposed to the verbal abuse that they throw at you.

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** It’s also very attention getting, what you said about being careful about using irreverent words to those who are not going to connect with that.

**Bruce:** Correct. Yes, be careful about that. For some, you don’t throw your pearls before swine. You’ve got to be careful.

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Now that’s where the Holy Spirit has to guide you in all of that. It’s critical that we understand that we’ve got to count God’s mercies more than the miseries they throw at us.

Psalm 35:28 is a good indication. This is what king David said. “And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and Thy praise all the day long.” What is he saying? I’ve got to think about God’s righteousness and God’s mercies more than the miseries that people throw at me. So we don’t give people what they stimulate within us. We give them what God has given to us, and that is called what? Ministry—giving away to somebody else what God has given you. That’s ministry. Yes, Don?

**Don:** I was thinking too, Bruce, of what it says in Ephesians 5.

**Bruce:** Oh yes.

**Don:** No coarse joking and that kind of thing, but rather thanksgiving.

**Bruce:** Amen.

**Don:** There’s a very thin line, because everyone knows my bad jokes—bad jokes meaning puns—and we like to kid each other and everything like that. Is there a fine line? I don’t know.

**Bruce:** Yes, there is. It’s a very fine line. I’m not sure how to answer that, but I would say this. The Scripture says in Ephesians “speech that edifies.”

**Don:** Yes.

**Bruce:** If it’s not edifying, which means building up and encouraging, then I would encourage you not to do it, even if it’s in a joking sense, if the joke is not going to be edifying.

Now let me just give you a crass example, and I don’t mean to call attention to myself, but you’ve all been through situations like this. As you know, I’m now dealing with the Parkinson’s, trying to manage that. And I have one friend who is one of my closest friends I have. But whenever he calls me, he says this. “Well, how long did it take you to get your shirt on today?”

**Participant:** Mm!

**Bruce:** Or “Did you get your socks on all right today? Did Becky need to help you?” Now he’s making light of that. But that doesn’t help me.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** That’s not helpful. If someone is going to make fun of my Parkinson’s, let me do it.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** But I’m saying, you know, that I understand his intent, so I don’t hold it against him. I did call him back and say, “Look, dear brother. I need you to understand something. That is not being edifying to me.”

And he immediately said, “Bruce, I never intended that to be harmful.”

I know he didn’t. But you’ve got to be careful. I think the fine line, Don, would be that if you know it’s not going to be edifying or that the intent is not going to be edifying, then I would say, “Don’t say it.” That may be as good a counsel as I can give.

The second thing in controlling our tongue, in addition to counting His mercies, I would say to pray Psalm 141 verse 3. Have this be part of your prayer life. “Set a guard



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over my mouth, O LORD. Keep watch over the door of my lips.” It’s a great prayer for us as you go into a difficult situation. “Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD. Keep watch over the door of my lips.”

**Participant:** Which one is that, please?

**Bruce:** Psalm 141, verse 3. It’s a great prayer, as you get into a situation. And then remember Exodus 14:14. “I will fight for you while you remain silent.” Sometimes the best response is no response, and trust God to intervene at that point.

The second thing he says is this. In addition to controlling your tongue, if you want to love life and have an enjoyable, long life, the second thing he says is this. Hate evil and do good. That means more than just avoiding evil or avoiding sin. It means to avoid it because you despise it or loathe it, because you know that God does.

**Participant:** Hmm!

**Bruce:** That’s what it means. Now when we talk about hating sin, I could give you a list of things that God hates. This is not merely overlooking sin. It’s overcoming it by replacing it with an act of goodness. When you see sin, choose to do an act of goodness, because your concept of sin controls your conduct. Your concept of sin is going to control your conduct. If you think lightly about sin, you’re going to respond lightly to it. If you think seriously about sin, you’re going to respond seriously about it and you’re going to do what? Overcome it by what? Acts of goodness. You see, you take sin seriously. And the way that you and I take sin seriously is not to overlook it. We take it seriously by doing an act of goodness because you never know what the Holy Spirit is going to do with an act of goodness. You give away what God has given you rather than what they stimulate within you.

Now I’m not saying that you back off and don’t deal with evil. That’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that our first immediate personal response is to overcome it with goodness and see what the Lord does. And then you will become aggressive responders.

Do you know why some people never change? It’s because they don’t hate their sin.

**Participant:** Mm! Amen!

**Bruce:** They don’t hate their sin. That’s why they never change. Be honest. Why is it that you and I choose to sin? I can only give you my answer and it is this. I say this in the context of you guys being my closest friends. It’s not for public dissemination. But the reason I choose to sin when I do—thought wise, conduct wise,—is because I love my sin more than I do Christ.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** I love my sin more than I do Christ. You see, the degree to which you and I view our sin is going to determine how we view our conduct. If you don’t take sin seriously, you’re never going to take your relationships seriously. Relationships, Peter says, give us a healthy and long life and enjoyment. Yes, Dick?

**Dick:** Bruce, I heard this week a preacher talking on the sin nature, and he used the word *contrition*. And I hadn’t heard that word for thirty or forty years, I don’t think, in terms of grieving over your sin, which is part of repentance.

**Bruce:** Right.

**Dick:** You just don’t hear that.

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**Bruce:** You don't. It's a godly sorrow. We need to have a godly sorrow over our sin. It's a grace that God produces within us, the grace of contrition, a grace of godly sorrow over our sin that leads us to repentance, saying, "Lord, I just don't want to do that. Put a guard over my tongue. I don't want to do that anymore." And so we need to take very seriously the sin that we see. Yes, Don?

**Don:** And not only that, but it's so easy to despise the sins of others.

**Bruce:** Oh, yes.

**Don:** And not our own sin, or to make excuses for our sin while despising others in their sin.

**Bruce:** Take a look at yourself. We don't come here to be Bible bashers to other people. If you're going to beat the Bible over the head of somebody, who are you going to beat?

**Participant:** Yourself.

**Bruce:** Beat up yourself but not anybody else. Maintain holy relationships. Overlook evil? No, we overcome it by doing acts of goodness.

Job says this in Job 28:28. "The fear of the LORD, That is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding." Look at that. Understanding is what? Shunning evil. But you've got to think right about it first. You've got to think right about your sin before you can shun it. If you don't think correctly about it, you're never going to shun it. That's understanding.

Notice this. Wisdom is the application of knowledge. And understanding is the demonstration of wisdom. We need to ask the Lord to give us wisdom, to be wise so that we can have an understanding. And when you demonstrate that, you're saying that you understand it because you're applying it in your life.

How about Proverbs 16 verse 6? "Through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil." We need to have a healthy respect and to stand in awe of who God is in all of His Person. That's why it's so important, friends, that you and I understand the twenty-eight attributes of God.

**Participant:** Mm!

**Bruce:** We need to understand who God is. In John 17, in His high priestly prayer, Jesus says this. "And this is eternal life, that you know Me, the One whom God has sent. You see, do you really know who God is? The degree to which you and I understand God's nature, attributes and character qualities will be the degree to which you and I will take our sin seriously, and it will be the degree to which we maintain holy relationships, and the degree to which we will control our tongue and overcome evil with good. Yes, please?"

**Participant:** Just to support all you were talking about, and I'm not saying this to be funny. A few years ago I went on a vacation to Bucacana. And at the reception desk a gentleman came up to me and asked me if I was there for the GLT conference.

And I said, "What's that?"

And it was gays, lesbians and transvestites. So for a week I was surrounded, not knowing this, by this element of society. And the problem was that I started to judge, and so on and so forth, and then I started to read Romans and I began to realize that was the

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only thing that gave me strength. I began to realize that, just as I felt subject to people making snide remarks or staring at me and saying things, I realized that that’s how God sees me when I feel or think the same, whether it’s a woman or anything else. I just began to see myself in the light that God saw me.

**Bruce:** Amen. We need to look at ourselves through God’s eyes, not through our own eyes or society’s eyes.

Love and respect for God must be greater than love for your sin. You and I need to learn to hate what God hates.

Now when I use the word *hate*, I’m not talking about the vitriolic anger and emotional feelings that we have when we say, “I hate you!” Remember, God is perfect. Whatever God does is in perfection. So His hatred is perfect. It’s really His personal indignation against all unrighteousness. It is His personal indignation against all unrighteousness that is wrapped up in this thing.

Now the word *hate* is a word that the Holy Spirit condescends to come down to our level so we understand the implications of it. It is not a characteristic of God. God is a God of wrath, and that is His personal indignation against all unrighteousness and sin. But we’ve got to be careful that when we say that God hates, it’s not the emotional anger that you and I have, the vitriolic response that is generated when we say that we hate something. That is not what the word means. It means His personal indignation against the unrighteousness that is wrapped up in that activity.

Now I have a list of forty-one things that God hates in the Scripture, forty-one things. Now I’m not going to give them all because that would be a message in itself. Here are just a couple of them.

God hates homosexual acts, except in America, right? God hates homosexual acts. God hates blemished sacrifices. God hates the worship of the sun, moon and stars. God hates divinations. God hates the wearing of clothes of the opposite sex.

Now there’s a whole list, friends, a whole list in the Scripture, that says these things God has personal indignation toward because it’s an offense to His righteousness, and He does not subscribe to that because it’s a personal reflection of the righteousness of His own character. So it’s His personal indignation against the unrighteousness that is found in those particular acts. It is not the hatred that you and I have that is vitriolic, retribitional hatred that we have. That’s not what He’s referring to.

**Participant:** Holy hatred.

**Bruce:** It’s a holy hatred. It’s a holy perfection. Remember, God is holy. So whatever God does is going to be holy. He has a holy hatred. You and I don’t have that. You and I have to fight that. But He has a holy hatred.

All I’m saying, friends, is to sometimes do a study in the Scripture and look at the things that God hates, because you and I must have respect and love for God that must overcome and be greater than the love for our sin. Do we understand the things that God hates? And when you find them, what do you do? You overcome them with—

**Participant:** Good.

**Bruce:** Works of goodness. And trust God to do something with it. Become aggressive responders to what they do. But what you are doing is that you’re allowing

### ***“Maintaining Holy Relationships” Part 3***

yourself not to be controlled by evil. You see, you’re experiencing your own freedom. When you give away what God has given you when you see evil, you’re no longer bound by that evil because you have overcome it because you did what? You replaced that evil with an act of goodness. And who is set free? You and I are set free because we’re not bound by it anymore, because you’ve overcome it. “I’ve overcome the world,” Jesus said. If I’m in Christ, I’m what? I’m an overcomer. You and I have overcome the world.

That doesn’t mean that we sit back and don’t deal with it. That’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that our personal, individual response is to overcome evil with an act of goodness and trust the Lord to work it out. Do you know what would happen if we had a whole bunch of people doing the same thing? There might be some changes made if we all did it collectively. Individually, we’ve got to do it ourselves and be responsible.

So we need to learn to despise those things that God hates. Acts of goodness is one of the greatest safeguards against evil. The doing of good deeds is one of the ways in which you and I individually and collectively and corporately can overcome evil. It’s our acts of goodness. We replace that and don’t give back what they stimulate within us.

In relationships that are strained what do we need to do? Look for opportunities for goodness.

How about 3 John verse 11? “Dear friends, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.”

And lastly he says this. In addition to controlling your tongue and replacing evil with good, he says that if you want to enjoy life and have a long life and love life, then seek and pursue peace. Don’t go looking for trouble, because you’ll find it.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Don’t go looking for it because you’ll find it. Because what will happen? It will find you.

Now this is not peace at any price. Righteousness must always be the basis of peace. Look at James chapter 3, verses 13-18. Would somebody read that if you have your Bible opened? James 3”13-18. This is not peace at any price. Righteousness must always be the basis of our peace. Yes, please?

**Participant:** Do you want me to read it?

**Bruce:** Yes. Would you, please? James 3.

**Participant:** “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his conduct let him show his words in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousies and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

**Bruce:** Notice. Peace is always a function of righteousness.

**Participant:** Amen.

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**Bruce:** So we’re not overlooking things, folks. We’re just saying that we’re going to create an environment where righteousness is put on display in the midst of evil. And that’s how I’m going to pursue peace.

A couple of verses in Romans will help us. Romans 12 verse 18. “If it is possible, as far as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone.” As far as it depends upon you. In other words, you do the best you can and you trust Christ with the rest. As far as it depends upon me, I’m going to be responsible to do what’s expected of me to pursue peace the best that I can, and I’m going to have to trust the rest to Christ because I can only do as much as I can.

Remember, righteousness is always the basis of seeking peace. In other words, if you look at Romans chapter 12, look at verse 19 after you’ve read 12:18. We need to “leave room for God’s wrath.” He is the One who will repay evil for evil. We don’t need to do that. So your verses would be Romans 12, verses 18 and 19.

Now how about Romans 14 verse 19? After discussing what is pleasing to God Paul writes these words. “Let us therefore make every effort to seek what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” Do whatever you can and trust Christ with the rest. Let Him be the One who is going to shower down His wrath. You and I don’t have to do that. Let Him do that. We need to give room to God’s wrath, and that’s something He will do. We need to be responsible in the meantime, as best as we can, to live at peace with all people, using your own efforts and trusting Christ with the rest.

And then lastly I want you to see the consequences. Notice in verse 12 of our passage. The summary is this.

Love one another. You have five attitudes toward insiders, two actions toward outsiders, and to love life you have three things to do. Control your tongue. Replace evil with good. And thirdly, pursue peace.

Now I want you to see the consequences of this quality of life. Peter is describing in a summary statement right now a life at its highest quality because notice this in verse 12. “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous.”

The little word *for* means that, when you’re doing the verses 8, 9, 10 and 11, here is the consequence of your application of those verses. “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.”

Notice this. His eyes are on the righteous. That means that God gives us His understanding. His ears are attentive to your prayers. God gives us His attention. He gives us His understanding and He gives us His attention. You might want to take a look at Psalm 88 verse 2.

And lastly, “the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” The word *face* means to have an audience with God. People who do evil are going to have an audience with God. They don’t need to have an audience with you or me. Let them have their audience with God. And guess who’s going to win? They’re not going to win because His face is against them. They’re going to have an audience with Him because of their evil deeds. The face against, to be rejected by God because of displeasure. Psalm 105 verse 4.

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So what kind of an audience are you and I going to have with God? Is it going to be one where He says, “Well done, My good and faithful servant?” Or is it going to be one where He says, “You rejected me. You’ll experience My wrath?” Which is it going to be? It’s all based upon relationships.

Love one another. Love your enemy and pursue peace. May it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said,

**Men:** Amen!

**Bruce:** Let’s pray. Father, thank You for the clarity of Your word. We thank You for it’s structure, how it flows together and does so logically. You teach us to practice to love one another before we can love outsiders. And you teach us, as we love outsiders, we begin not to be controlled by the world but we control it by controlling our tongue. Father, set a guard on my lips, that my thoughts will be on the righteousness of Christ. And I will consider Your mercies more than I do the abuses that are thrown at me verbally. May God be pleased with the way we respond. And all God’s men said, “Amen!”