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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“DO WE LOVE LIFE?”**  
**First Peter 3:8-17**

? *Do we love life?* Or do we find it bland, or wearisome, or even intolerable?

? *Are we seeing “good days”?* Or is each new day another exercise in frustration, failure, and futility?

☑ Beth and I celebrated our twentieth anniversary by vacationing on Mackinac Island this summer. We had all of our breakfasts in the hotel dining room.

The buffet was excellent. The food was fresh and flavorful and plentiful, and there were a range of choices for a diabetic like me. I have never had a better hotel breakfast in my life.

The view was exquisite. The dining room looks out on Haldimond Bay with Biddle’s Point on the right, Mission Point on the left, and Round Island straight across the channel.

The company was exceptional. Most mornings at our house are “controlled chaos” at best; but this week we had time to talk and simply be together at the table.

Breakfast at the hotel was an unexpected blessing. Booking our room through Hotwire saved us a lot of money, but we thought the deal did not cover any meals. Breakfasts were expensive, so we planned to go elsewhere; you can imagine our delight when we heard they were included at no extra charge.

So there we are one morning eating first-rate food, drinking delicious coffee, watching ferries and sailboats come and go on the water and people and horses pass by on Main Street. Suddenly, I am keenly aware of God’s kindness and generosity. My soul is pierced through with gratitude.

This not mainly about Mackinac: in this moment I see that life is good on vacation *and* at work; when events are exciting *and* mundane; when money is abundant *and* tight; when things are easy *and* when they take blood, sweat and tears; when I am treated honorably *and* shamefully; when I feel healthy *and* sick; when I am happy *and* sad *and* angry or whatever.

I have my share of troubles. There are times when I hate my circumstances, days when nothing goes right. That does not change the truth that life is good. God has given me many reasons to love it.

Just then, as I am contemplating this, a couple at a nearby table begins to complain, loudly enough that we cannot help but overhear them. The hotel is a dump, the service is lousy, the food is rotten, the weather is horrible, and Mackinac is a waste of time!

That isn’t the half of it. The husband blames the wife for his misery, while the wife blames the husband for hers. Their voices ooze mutual loathing. There is far more involved here than a disappointing vacation.

I get the distinct impression that this couple does *not* love life. They probably aren’t seeing a lot of good days.

What about us?

■ Please turn to First Peter 3:10a: **“For, ‘Whoever among you would love life and see good days...’”**

Is there anyone among us who *doesn’t* want to **“love life and see good days”**? I didn’t think so.

? The question is: *how can we “love life”*? *How can we “see good days”*?

■ Let’s take a look at what the Holy Spirit says through Peter. Back to verse 10a: **“For, ‘Whoever among you would love life and see good days...’”**

**“For”** is pivotal. It indicates that **“[loving] life and [seeing] good days”** are the fruit of the actions laid out in the **vv 8-9**, which is where we will spend most of our time.

■ V 8 zeroes in on our relationships within the Church.

★ **“All of you, be like-minded.”**

This is *not* a demand for mindless uniformity. It is an invitation to mindful unity. Unity entails:

① Embracing the apostolic teachings recorded in Scripture and affirmed by the faithful Church in every time and place;

② Working harmoniously together to achieve the mission of the Church; and

③ Tearing down the idols that divide us: selfish ambition, sexism, classism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, denominationalism, legalism, and so on.

★ **“All of you” “be sympathetic.”**

{Rom 12:15} **“Rejoice with those”** in this Body **“who rejoice”** even when your days are full of struggle and pain.

**“Mourn with those”** in this Body **“who mourn”** even when things couldn’t be going better for you.

★ **“All of you” “love one another.”**

📖 {Mt 22:37-40} Αγαπαω [agapaō] is the N.T. verb of choice for **“love.”** Usually when you come across **“love”** it is translating αγαπαω or the noun αγαπη or another related form. This is practical, sacrificial love that does not depend on the recipient’s worth, the giver’s feelings, or any other natural factor.

Αγαπη is in the love commands. It is in our Gospel reading from John 15. It is in I Peter 1:8 and 4:8. It appears hundreds of times. It’s everywhere!

📖 But not here! Here in 3:8 Peter uses φιλεω [phileō]. This is warm brotherly (sisterly) love, not for biological family (that would be στοργη [storgē]) but for spiritual siblings. Φιλεω is love for those to whom one is bound by shared beliefs, values, mission, and experiences.

★ **“All of you” “be compassionate.”**

{Col 3:12-13} Compassion is a kissing cousin to sympathy, but it centers more tightly on mercy. It is a generous response to frailty and failure. Paul captures the essence of this when he advises, **“clothe yourselves”** with **“kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

★ And **“all of you, be” “humble.”**

True humility is not thinking less of oneself (as in, “I’m a worthless loser!”); it’s thinking of yourself less, it is not being preoccupied with your concerns.

This does not rule out reflection. To the contrary, it requires clear-eyed self-assessment! The humble know their strengths and weaknesses, aptitudes and inabilities, best practices and worst habits. They treat others with respect. They listen well. They are teachable, receptive to new information, feedback, and correction. The humble do not take it upon themselves to humble others.

If **“you would love life and see good days” “be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.”** Strange, isn't it?!

■ Verse 9 is always pertinent, but especially in relation to hostile non-believers: **“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 might inherit a blessing.”**

It's a straightforward teaching. We don't need help interpreting the original meaning, or even the basic application.

What everyone is dying to know is, what are the exceptions? When is retaliation justified? When does this not apply to me?

■ Verses 10-12 suggest an answer:

**“Whoever among you would love life  
and see good days  
must keep your tongue from evil  
and your lips from deceitful speech.  
Turn from evil and do good;  
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.”**

✈ God opposes evil speech and action regardless who does it. Peter is writing to Christ Followers when he instructs, **“keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from deceitful speech.”**

■ Likewise, in verses 15-16 he directs us to **“Always be [ready with] an answer... But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience.”**

That takes us back to 2:20b-23:

**If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, *this* is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**

**“He committed no sin, and no sin deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. He entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”**

If **“you would love life and see good days” “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing...”** Strange, isn't it?!

I do not have all the answers! But allow me to share a few observations.

✈ First, pursuing right relationships is what makes a life worth loving. Good days are ones that are lived in harmony with verses 8-9.

■ The prevailing assumption is that contentment and joy depend on pleasant circumstances. Yet in verse 14 Peter writes, **“Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”** And in verse 17 he states that **“It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good.”** Peter is inviting suffering people to love life and see good days!

✈ Second, the Holy Spirit is powerful to fulfill this word in and among us. In Christ we *can* **“be like-minded ...sympathetic, [loving]... compassionate and humble.”** We *can* **“repay evil with blessing,”** answer insults **“with gentleness and respect.”** We *can* courageously bear up under unjust suffering!

Not in our strength; in the strength of the Lord! Not because we are super-saints; because we **“have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood”** (First Peter 1:2).

✈ Third, we live by grace, the undeserved mercy and kindness of God.

I often fail to live up to the holy calling outlined in this passage. My sin drives me to my knees and compels me to seek forgiveness again and again.

My repeated failures can be discouraging. Yet the realization of my own fault and frailty also opens my eyes to the liberating truth that the LORD God has chosen me not because I am good but because he is amazingly good, not because I am loveable but because he is pure love!

{Php 2:13} And when I do fulfill our calling: when I am **“like-minded”** and **“sympathetic,”** when I **“love”** and I am **“compassionate and humble”** and I **“repay evil with blessing,”** when I **“keep [my] tongue from evil and [my] lips from deceitful speech”** and I **“Turn from evil... do good; seek peace and pursue it,”** then I know that it is not me doing it – **“it is God who works in [me] to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”**

Would we love life? Would we see good days?

This is the way! First Peter 3:8-17 is the word of the Lord.