

# Living the Good Life

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[ 0 : 00 ] Interesting subject tonight, we're going to talk about the good life.

! That the good life, as defined by the world, the flesh, and the devil, is a far cry different from that as defined by God in His inerrant Word.

The passage we will be looking at tonight is found in 1 Peter 3, and we're going to be focusing on verses 8-12. So we'll start at 1 Peter 3, and I'm going to read verses 8-12.

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.

[ 1 : 42 ] 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.

I think most Americans, certainly of a certain age, like the words, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

[ 2 : 46 ] That phrase, of course, was immortalized by Thomas Jefferson when he wrote them into the unalienable rights portion of the Declaration of Independence.

Now we live in a time when those words have taken on a much different context. Our culture today seeks immediate gratification in the form of possessions.

People want a bigger house, newer cars, more money in the bank, and so forth. Many today live in a hedonistic lifestyle.

Hedonism is pursuing pleasure for sexual, sensual, or self-indulgent reasons. One of the most famous hedonists in the American experience, and there were many, and are many many, many, many, many, many, many years.

One of the most famous was Ernest Hemingway. He wrote very noteworthy literature. I've read much of it.

[ 4 : 11 ] I was forced to in school. But he wrote good stuff. Books like *The Sun Also Rises*, and my personal favorite, *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Often his books were set in Cuba, because that's where he lived at the time. That was kind of before Castro. Hemingway died by suicide from a blast in the head by his shotgun.

And by every appearance, he died without Christ. The Bible tells of men that lived a hedonistic lifestyle.

One such that comes to mind was Solomon. He had incredible wealth. He had land, horses, other livestock, palaces, and more beautiful women than he could count.

He was also king, meaning he had great power and great influence. But Solomon basically died unfulfilled.

[ 5 : 46 ] Toward the end of his life, he wrote these words in Ecclesiastes 2, I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

And Solomon ended his life with this sad commentary, also recorded for us in Ecclesiastes 4, verses 1-3.

And I thought the dead, who are already dead, more fortunate than the living are still alive.

But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not yet seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

Well, as followers of Christ, where do we fit in to all of this? How should we then live?

[ 7 : 20 ] And by the way, those words I borrowed from a title of a book written by the great Dr. Francis Schaeffer. He wrote 24 books.

I read most of them, not all of them. And the Apostle Peter will help us to answer that question in our passage this evening.

When we are going to live the good life, which means godly life, the life prescribed by God, the first thing we want to do is have the right attitude.

We are going to have the right attitude. 1 Peter 3, 2nd part of verse 8. First, we are to have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

And I put parenthesis, spirit, same word. A humble spirit. A humble spirit. And these words come to us inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, without any mixture of error, God who cannot lie.

[ 8 : 39 ] These are the inerrant words of the triune God. And we actually see here in this sentence five spiritual values that come to us from the Lord.

And the first one, and in the ESV it's unity of mind, but in the New American Standard it's harmony. And harmonious. And harmonious is actually, if you look at the Greek language, a better translation, I think.

It comes from a Greek word meaning, think the same way. Well, you know, if you're thinking the same way as somebody, you're going to be harmonious. You're going to live in harmony with each other.

Think the same way. That's a great picture of living together in harmony. That means we should all, as followers of Christ, have a common commitment.

[ 9 : 52 ] That can happen when, together, we all embrace what Dr. Schaeffer used to call true truth.

Which is a way of saying God's truth. With Christ as the head, we should never be in conflict with one another.

He's given us the blueprint for living. Why should there be any conflict? That is true even if we find ourselves under extreme persecution.

And I've been in the persecuted countries. I've been with persecuted believers. I was with a man in China, Alan Ewan, and I met him twice. A wonderful man.

He's with the Lord now. Alan spent 22 years at hard labor in China. Would go out every day. And then he was released and spent 10 years under house arrest.

[ 11 : 00 ] Meaning he could not step out on his front porch. And was not supposed to look out a window. So a total of 32 years.

This guy had the greatest attitude of anyone I ever met. And when he was finally permitted to go outside, it was very interesting. He actually started a church.

He baptized 300 people that weekend. In a public swimming pool. The Chinese authorities came and said, What are you all doing? He said, We're teaching them to swim. Oh, okay. Here, we'll help you.

It was an amazing story. I sat and talked to him for a couple of hours. He knew very good English. But we are to embrace true truth.

Even if we're under extreme persecution. The apostle Paul captures this in Philipppians. Chapter 1, verse 27 and 28.

[ 12 : 06 ] Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Now think about those words. That's a tall order.

Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. That's Paul speaking, who wrote Philipppians.

If we can live like this, it does not matter what the world throws at us. Let them throw stuff. That's okay.

We'll start a baseball game. Jesus, of course, instructed us to love one another.

[ 13 : 22 ] And I'll tell you, he put a high price on that. He said, if you love one another, the world will know that you belong to me and that I came from God.

That's a tall order. Because the opposite is true. If you don't love one another, church, the world will question whether you belong to me and whether I'm the true Messiah, whether I really came from God the Father.

So it's a serious deal. Jesus told us that he prayed to the Father that we would be spiritually united. And I can tell you that prayer was answered. How do I know that? Jesus never prayed a prayer to the Father that wasn't answered. And that comes right out of John 17, the high priestly prayer, which I love dearly.

I love dearly. The church can be harmonious if we are one in Christ.

[ 14 : 33 ] Listen to Dr. Luke in the book of Acts. And he wrote on harmony, the harmony of the early church.

This is in Acts chapter 2. And that's pretty early in the early church history, starting in verse 42. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And all came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any who had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

[ 15 : 45 ] And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved. And it was a massive revival.

Remember when Peter got up and preached a sermon and 3,000 people got saved? It reminds me of the 3,000 people in the Old Testament that died because they were disobedient.

And the earth swallowed them up. But in the New Testament, 3,000 got saved. We are also to be sympathetic, to have sympathy one for another.

You want to live the good life? Have a good measure of sympathy. Sympathy is one of the virtues you must have and exercise if you want to experience the full Christian life.

This word is defined in the original language as sharing the same feeling. We are to be united on the truth of the gospel.

[ 17 : 02 ] But we are also to be ready to sympathize with those who are in pain. Those who need a measure of sympathy.

This included brothers and sisters in Christ we may not even know. We can do this because we have a great example.

We have Jesus who is called our sympathetic high priest. We are to share in one another's sorrows and share in one another's joys.

If you have a sorrow, have the courage to come and tell us. And you don't have to tell the whole class, but pick out someone that you are close to. But if you have a joy, share that.

And share that with the whole class. Because we should be joyous as well. It is very important.

[ 18 : 09 ] But the uniting part of this is the gospel. The gospel of Christ. Share in each other's sorrows and in each other's joys.

We should never be insensitive to those around us, including the lost. If we are not going to tell them the truth, who is?

Who is going to tell them? Some people walking down your street ringing your doorbell? Another virtue for the good life is brotherly love.

This is the Greek word, Philadelphia, meaning brotherly. We speak of the city of Philadelphia.

And there's a number of Philadelphias. Philadelphia, Mississippi. But Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is the biggest city. And it's called the city of brotherly love.

[ 19 : 27 ] Now, I've been there many times. It's really not. But they like to say that they are. And so, the level of love here refers to having affection, strong affection for someone or a group of someones.

It comes from the Greek word phileo, which is not at the level of agape. Phileo is, I really like you a whole bunch. Consider you be a very good personal friend.

And I want to help you if your family is in need, whatever. Agape is another level. Agape says, I'm going to the cross for you. I'm going to take your place on that instrument of death.

That was agape love. Agapeo. But phileo is an interesting word. We're to have this level of love among our brothers and sisters in the church.

And then, that level of love should extend outward to the world. We don't keep it here. We extend it outward.

[ 20 : 41 ] And you know, we've been blessed over the years to do a lot in different parts of the world. China, Latvia, and Ukraine, Cuba.

Mexico. I got to go to Cuba. That was a great trip. Pakistan. We had one of our members that was over in Far Asia.

There's just so many opportunities we've had. Another virtue is be kind-hearted. The ESV translates this as tender-hearted.

It's interesting here. This is one of those Greek words. And you'll have to look this up to believe it. I hope to believe it, but it's the same word that was often translated bowels or intestines.

Now, obviously, they use that in a different manner than we do today. But the ancients used such words because of the intensity of the situation.

[ 21 : 57 ] They really went deep and had these deep feelings, and that was what they came up with. It was a powerful feeling inside a person.

And the greatest example of being tender-hearted is the love that Christ has for sinners that He's willing to save by taking their place on the cross, the substitutionary death of Christ.

And then it says we're to be humble in spirit. That's the last item we have on our list of how to enjoy the Christian life.

Humble in spirit, or being humble-minded, is one word in the Greek language. And being humble is the essential quality of life in the Christian.

It's the Christian. It's the Christian life. To be humble. We have wonderful examples of this.

[ 23 : 08 ] A couple of them stand out. One is from Paul, the apostle. The other, from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In Philippians 2.3, Paul wrote these words, Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.

Well, that's good advice. But in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.

That's the apostle Paul. Great words. Jesus said this, Take my yoke upon you.

You guys know what a yoke was? Yoke of oxen? And learn from me. And learn from me. For I am gentle.

And humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. The words of the living Christ.

[ 24 : 20 ] Be gentle. Be humble. We are to be humble. We are to be humble just as our Savior was humble.

Now in addition to having the right attitude, we must also have the right response. In 1 Peter 3.9, it says this, 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. We must have the right actions, but we also must have the proper reactions to any situation.

If we are mistreated, we must not return evil for evil. You know, don't have that attitude. I'm going to get that guy back.

If a believer is not repaying evil for evil, he must not start doing so. If a believer is repaying evil for evil, he needs to stop right now.

[ 25 : 40 ] You have to stop that. Jesus actually addressed this in the great sermon on the mount.

Let me read to you Matthew 5. starting in verse 38. You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

That, by the way, came from the Roman soldiers. They'd be out traveling somewhere. They'd see a band of Jews. And they said, come here and carry your baggage and carry, you know.

[ 26 : 50 ] And Jesus said, how far do you want us to go? A mile? We'll go two miles. They couldn't figure that out. Who is this guy?

Give to the one who begs from you. And do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

That was revolutionary. Love your enemies? They grew up believing the opposite. Love your friends, love your family, hate your enemies.

And then Jesus comes along, turned the world upside down. Now we don't use that word reviling much anymore in our language.

[ 27 : 57 ] It is a form of saying, don't insult someone as payback for them insulting you.

If someone insults you, don't insult them back. If you're being reviled or insulted, offer that person a blessing.

Give them a blessing. This is also what the Apostle Paul said as well. Paul is on record of having violated this truth once.

Here is that passage. Acts 23, 1-5. This is the great Apostle Paul. And looking intently at the council, Paul said, Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day. And the high priest and Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, to the high priest, God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall.

[ 29 : 16 ] I have a feeling that was a lot worse then than it is today. Although I've never called anyone that. Paul says, Are you sitting to judge me according to the law?

And yet contrary to the law, you order me to be struck? Those who stood by said, Would you revile God's high priest? Well, Paul suddenly got very humble.

And he said, I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest. For it is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. Now, I don't know everything that was going on there, but I do remember Paul had really bad eyesight.

So maybe that was part of the problem. If we are retaliated against or insulted or reviled, offer that person a blessing.

Because we are to speak well of others. We are also to have the right standard. In 1 Peter 3, verses 10 and 11, we read these words.

[ 30 : 27 ] 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. And Peter here gives us passages to live by.

And the right standard is found in the Word of God. Much of what is quoted in this portion of 1 Peter is actually taken from Psalm 34.

So reflect on these principles as a way of living the good life. And to see the good days. Keeping your tongue from evil.

Keeping your mouth from speaking deceit. Speaking deceit. Turning away from evil.

[ 31 : 43 ] Doing good. Seeking peace. Pursuing peace.

Now surely you can find room on your refrigerator among grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Make that list out.

Just take a copy of this lesson, we pass it out and cut that up and post it there. And finally we must have the right incentive. 1 Peter 3, verse 12.

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.

Again, that is Peter quoting Psalm 34. And here he covers verses 15 and 16 in Psalm 34.

[ 32 : 51 ] The eyes of the Lord are in frequent use in the Old Testament. What is meant by the eyes of the Lord? It was used in the Old Testament to describe a sovereign God who rules, the Lord.

He's looking at all of us. He is the God who sees everything. He is the God who knows everything. God who holds people accountable for their behavior. That doesn't give me a warm and fuzzy. I'm accountable for my behavior? Yeah.

And a God who can punish the disobedient. But what is truly being stressed here is the God whose eyes are on the righteous.

Now you might be sitting there saying, well, I don't feel very righteous. I wasn't very righteous today. More talking about the imputed righteousness of Christ.

[ 34 : 09 ] If you're a follower of Christ, you have his imputed righteousness. If you're not, you don't have that and you need it desperately. And if you don't have it and you need it and want it, come talk to us.

We'll talk about it. The God who hears and responds to the prayers of his people as they seek mercy and have their needs met.

That's the God that we serve. What an amazing God. Let's close with a word of prayer. Let's close with a word of prayer. Gracious Father, we thank you for bringing us together, brothers in Christ.

We thank you, Lord, for your word. It has stood the test of time. Not one jot or tittle is going to disappear from your word.

Lord, may we take it to heart. Reflect on it. Study it. Apply it. And share it with others.

[ 35 : 20 ] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.