

4Ws live in hope

LIVING WITH HOPE: WHEN RELATIONSHIPS ARE DIFFICULT

MAY 23, 2021

WORSHIP

Nothing is Impossible,
Grace That Won't
Let Go, Hope in the
Precious

WELCOME

How would you
describe a “toxic” or
difficult person?

WORD

1 PETER 3:8-9

⁸ To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

(READ 1 PETER 3:1-12 FOR FULL CONTEXT)

There is an interesting phenomenon in Japan called JOUHATSU wherein people purposely “vanish into thin air”, hiding themselves in anonymity for years and decades to escape domestic tensions and abuse, debt, job loss, failures, and the like.

You see, stress does not only come from external problems. It may also come from family relationships. The difficult people in our life may be our loved ones. However, sometimes, the most difficult person in our lives would be ourselves! Reflect and ask yourself: “**how is it like living with me?**” Many times, we need to see a mirror and realize that we are the difficult people.

As we continue our study on 1 Peter, we encounter Peter’s views and wisdom regarding how we are to relate with others. **1 Peter 3:1** begins with “In the same way” which points us to the previous verses written in the context of living with difficult people. God’s will for us is to submit with respect to authority, do what is right even in suffering, and not to revolt and fight but learn to respect them just as Christ has done. Jesus committed no sin but when he suffered injustice, He submitted Himself to God who judges righteously (**1 Peter 2:21-22**). God can use difficult people to train us. His methods can be counterintuitive. For example—to be a leader, we must be a servant; in order to be the greatest, we must be the last (**Luke 22:26-27**). Human relationships are complex and it is important that we understand and follow God’s design for relationships to achieve the best results. We must see God’s wisdom and live it out.

There are 3 important principles from **1 Peter 3:1-12** on how we can live with difficult people with hope—**K.F.C.**:

1. KNOW GOD’S WILL

“God’s will” talks about His design. It is different from “God’s way” which focuses on how to carry out that design and the practical ways it can be exhibited. The Bible reminds us in **Romans 12:2** to not copy the ways of the world and to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. God wants you to know His will and prove that His will is good, acceptable, and perfect. **James 1:22** also commands us to prove ourselves as doers of the word. When we know God’s will, it becomes easier for us to follow His ways. Many times, His ways are contrary to the ways of the world as what we have seen in chapter 2 and we now see in chapter 3.

2. FOLLOW GOD’S WAY

Peter starts with instruction for wives and encouragement for them to be chaste and respectful in their behavior (**1 Peter 3:2**) despite the cultural setup where women had no rights. The wives’ dilemma seems to have even increased after coming to Christ because of two things: the authority of their husband and the concept of freedom in Christ. So, wives are encouraged to submit from the heart with respect, with a gentle and quiet spirit whether or not their husbands treated them as equals as God sees them. The power of modelling this virtue of Jesus can be one’s silent witness to others, even to unbelieving husbands. In **vv.5-6**, Peter goes back to the Old Testament and uses Sarah as

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an example of a gentle and quiet spirit. She demonstrated how it was to hope in God. The more you know and trust God, the more you are able to live out God's ways.

God's ways are always balanced. The Bible also provides the ways by which husbands and wives should interact with one another (**Ephesians 5:22, 25**). A wife's submission must be done "as to the Lord" and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Follow God's way—no excuses. It is never conditional nor 50-50! Peter expounds the husbands' role as well (**1 Peter 3:7**). Husbands are told to live with their wives in an understanding way. Understand your wife and see that her needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual, are met. The verse also describes the precious and more physically fragile nature of women and husbands must show her honor and respect. This is not a concept of inequality as the Bible is clear that we are one in Christ Jesus (**Galatians 3:28**). Different roles do not mean superiority or inferiority. True spirituality is tested in the home life and in committed relationships where you can't run and escape from. We must relate others with respect, honor, and understanding. Fulfill this through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. CLING TO GOD'S PROMISES

Peter sums it up by emphasizing love in action in **1 Peter 3:8-9**. This is an applicable value for everyone. He stressed the qualities by which we should be interacting with others, especially our family members—in harmony, with sympathy, kindheartedness, and even in humility. You and I are called to inherit a blessing, and Peter tells how we can inherit God's blessing—obedience to His will, His way. Clinging to God's promises and the blessing of answered prayers are always connected to **OBEDIENCE**. In God's economy, you cannot separate the two. **1 Peter 3:10-12** is an exact quotation from the Old Testament. Do you desire to see good days? Peter tells us to "**keep our tongue from evil**". Deal with the sins of the heart as **Luke 6:45** also emphasized. Turning away from evil and doing good (**1 Peter 3:11**) is the condition for us to enjoy God's blessings.

The key to blessing is to understand the condition: repentance, seeking and pursuing peace, and continue in righteousness. Peter gives an assurance of the promise that God sees, God knows, and God cares. Many times, we don't realize that God wants us to be motivated by His promises. Living by His promises allows us to show our faith in Him. We will indeed face trials, but we can live with hope. **Deuteronomy 30:19-20** shows us the contrast between life and death, blessings and curse. The Lord encouraged us to choose His ways which leads to a blessed life. God's blessing can only be experienced when know (and obey) **God's will**, follow **God's ways**, and cling to **God's promises**.

We all face difficult people but are we able to influence them? Either God changes the person or God will change us. God can use difficult people to sanctify us, to train us, and to transform us into better people—more like Jesus! May we really show that we are **people of hope** as we interact with others in our relationships. Let us put this love and hope in action today!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

How can you know what is God's way, God's will, and God's time?

2. Setting It Right

How can you improve so that others will see more of Christ in you this week?

3. Living It Out

How can you continue loving people who are a source of difficulty for you?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for the "difficult" people in your life to have the eagerness to know God's will, God's ways, and God's promises in the Bible. Extend an act of kindness today to someone whom you find hard to relate with. Share the hope that you have in Christ to people experiencing relational difficulties.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation
- Wisdom and timely, effective response to the pandemic

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends



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