

Evil for Evil Relationships

1 Peter 3:1-9 HCSB Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the *Christian* message, they may be won over without a message by the way their wives live, (2) when they observe your pure, reverent lives. (3) Your beauty should not consist of outward things *like* elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes; (4) instead, *it should consist of* the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes. (5) For in the past, the holy women who hoped in God also beautified themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, (6) just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do good and aren't frightened by anything alarming. (7) Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives with understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as co-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. (8) Now finally, all of you should be like-minded and sympathetic, should love believers, and be compassionate and humble, (9) not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you can inherit a blessing.

Spouses are either competing with or completing one another. It is an unfortunate fact that few couples experience the oneness God designed for marriage. Due to specific spiritual problems in their lives, conflicts develop between the husband and wife deteriorating into what Peter describes as an "evil for evil" relationship.

There are four ways to respond to one another in marriage. Spouses can return:

1. Evil for evil

If the response is evil for evil, Peter says God **will be against them**.

- **1 Peter 3:12 HCSB** **because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their request. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**

There are two ways an evil for evil relationship is expressed. **Obvious evil for evil** is an attack on one's spouse with the intent to do harm, whether verbal or physical. Name-calling and verbal attacks are common in an obvious evil for evil relationship. When both husband and wife come from a background of this type, they will consider their responses as normal behavior.

A **hidden evil for evil** relationship occurs when two people, both reaching out of their pain of rejection and aloneness, make statements that hurt one another. For example, a wife asks her husband to fix something. He reacts, feeling criticized and unappreciated for what he's already done. She retorts that she can't appreciate him since he never talks to her. He lets her know that it's not much fun talking to a nagging wife. The wife then feels criticized for everything she does and locks her pain within.

Both of them feel hurt, rejected, and frustrated causing them to emotionally withdraw from one another. The end result is a draining of all emotional energy from out of the relationship, blocking any further communication.

Returning evil for evil **destroys a relationship**. An evil for evil relationship destroys love and positive feelings toward one another. Hearts become hardened and couples no longer enjoy being in each other's presence. The consequences of that conflict result in emotional damage that consumes one's spouse.

- **Hebrews 12:14-15 HCSB** Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness--without it no one will see the Lord. (15) See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and by it, defiling many.

- **Galatians 5:14-16 HCSB** For the entire law is fulfilled in one statement: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** (15) But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another. (16) I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Returning evil for evil causes **confusion** and fosters a **desire to get even**.

- **James 3:16-18 HCSB** For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. (17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy. (18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

We need to **decide whether we are going to obey** God's command in this regard or not.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:15 HCSB** See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all.

2. Evil for good

If the response is "evil for good," Solomon says that **evil will never depart** from the perpetrators house.¹

- **Proverbs 17:13 HCSB** If anyone returns evil for good, evil will never depart from his house.

Consider Jeremiah's **imprecatory prayer** against those who returned evil for good.

- **Jeremiah 18:19-23 HCSB** Pay attention to me, LORD. Hear what my opponents are saying! (20) Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You to speak good on their behalf, to turn Your anger from them. (21) Therefore, hand their children over to famine, and pour the sword's power on them. Let their wives become childless and widowed, their husbands slain by deadly disease, their young men struck down by the sword in battle. (22) Let a cry be heard from their houses when You suddenly bring raiders against them, for they have dug a pit to capture me and have hidden snares for my feet. (23) But You, LORD, know all their deadly plots against me. Do not wipe out their guilt; do not blot out their sin before You. Let them be forced to stumble before You; deal with them in the time of Your anger.

God answered that prayer exactly as requested. Every one of these curses came about exactly as the prophet said. That means God agreed with him. God hates those who return evil for good.

Small wonder the prophet Isaiah exclaimed,

- **Isaiah 5:20 HCSB** Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

3. Good for good

The "**Golden Rule**" is Jesus' description of a **proactive** "good for good" relationship.

- **Luke 6:31 HCSB** **Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.**

However, a **passive** "good for good" is **not the epitome** of reactions.

¹ David about Nabal 1 Samuel 25:21; also Job 30:26; Psalm 35:12; 38:20; 109:5

- **Luke 6:32-33 HCSB** If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. (33) If you do *what is good* to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.

4. Good for evil

If our response is “good for evil,” we will **experience God’s blessing**

- **1 Peter 3:9 HCSB** not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you can inherit a blessing.

Not returning evil for evil is **not passive**. It is a **viable, positive strategy**.

- **Romans 12:17-21 HCSB** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. (18) If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone. (19) Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: **Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay**, says the Lord. (20) **But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.** (21) Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

Failing in this can result in **unanswered prayers**. (1 Peter 3:7, 12 cp Matthew 6:12)

We men must take into account that if a husband fails to take his wife into every area of his life – dwell with her according to knowledge – and fails to honor her, God will not answer his prayers.

- **1 Peter 3:7 HCSB** Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives with understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as co-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Women should not breathe too easy because God will not answer the prayers of anyone unwilling to resolve an evil for evil relationship.

- **1 Peter 3:12 HCSB** **because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their request. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**
- **Cp Matthew 6:12 HCSB** **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

If we do, God promises five personal rewards for responding positively.

1. We will **inherit a blessing**.
2. We will **enjoy life**.
3. We will **see good days**.
4. God will **view us with pleasure**.
5. God will **answer our prayers**.

Derashot:

1. Seek to be **harmonious and of one mind**. Peter described a unity of heart and spirit.
2. Seek to be **sympathetic and empathetic**. Show compassion for the feelings and needs of your spouse.
3. Seek to **love** as a family should. Increase your commitment to your spouse.
4. Seek to **be courteous**. Put your spouse first and **show respect**.

5. Seek to return a blessing. “Eulogize” them. Our English word “eulogize” comes from the Greek word used here for blessing. Often recite the many good things your spouse has done in the past.