

WORD

⁸Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹Do 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. **1 PETER 3:8,9**

Peter encouraged the Christian community to live in *unity*, compassion, *love*, tenderness, and humility, blessing one another. This is what relational unity is. However, this environment and culture is only possible because our lives have been changed by the gospel. Christ-like conduct is only possible because of a Christ-transformed heart. In this lesson, we will look at three choices we need to make to guard relational unity and reflect the transforming power of the gospel.

1 Choose humility over pride.

... Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." **1 PETER 5:5**

Peter called Christians to have a *humble mind*, and to clothe ourselves with *humility toward one another*. Pride is our default as humans and sinners, but because of Christ's power in our lives, we can intentionally choose humility over pride. What is humility? What does choosing humility look like when it comes to relationships?

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2 Choose love over selfishness.

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. **1 PETER 3:8**

The same way it is with pride, it is easier and more "natural" to selfishly consider ourselves first or put ourselves ahead of others. However, Christ gave up His very life for us, selflessly and out of love. Because of this, we can choose to treat each other out of love and not selfishness. How can we reflect *brotherly love* in our church community?

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3 Choose forgiveness over revenge.

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.

1 PETER 3:9

(Read also **MATTHEW 18:21,22.**)

Another "natural" response in relationships is to choose revenge or bitterness over forgiveness. In Matthew 18, Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive someone up to seven times. Three was the limit of generosity in their culture; seven times seemed to be overflowing and generous. Jesus answered that he should forgive up to *seventy-seven* times—basically, as many times as he had to. In 1 Peter, the apostle tells us we are called to bless one another no matter how we are treated. Share a time when you had to choose forgiveness over revenge, and it brought you closer to someone in the church community.

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