

## Women's Bible Study

### 1Peter 3:8

Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

1Peter 3:8 To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

*To sum up* ... You could say, in conclusion or the main point of all that was said, the goal or the desired result or purpose. If you have ever given a speech in school or written a paper, you typically begin with a goal and end with the most important thing to remember. It's like saying, if there is anything at all you take away from this, here it is ...

*“Finally. As the last direction, or as general counsel in reference to your conduct in all the relations of life”, Albert Barnes' NT Commentary.*

Read 1Peter 2:13 – 3:7

In review, the Apostle Peter gives us the shortlist addressing the responsibilities of **all** believers; common exhortations to live in harmony towards the same goals. No matter the position or role, there is an expected response to one another in all those who follow Christ. Each child of God, all those whosoever follow Him, are given a lifestyle pattern to follow.

Does this mean in **every** circumstance and situation we are to strive for harmony, sympathy, love, compassion, and humility? Yes, what else could it mean?

Do you read any exceptions?

When we look at verse 9 next week, we are given a few specific examples of fulfilling these commands. But for now we will stay with the text in verse 8 and seek to understand more fully each descriptive word written to us. In this way, we will get insight into the possible applications of 1Peter 3:8.

**Be harmonious** – like-minded, of one mind. Harmonious, is from *homophron* in the Greek text and only occurs this one time in the New Testament.

*“Finally, in managing your affairs as a religious society, be all, whether married or not, of one mind”, Macknight on the Epistles.*

Unity is necessary in all relationships in order to run well. Harmony or like-mindedness in our goals will affect the outcome of our service. If members of the body work together well, we are blessed with forward movement in our desire to honor Jesus. When we lack unity or harmony, our ministry becomes difficult. As children of God we have one purpose – to glorify Him in all things, and one mission – to make disciples.

The English definition for harmonious reads, “Exhibiting equivalence or correspondence among constituents of an entity or between different entities; musically pleasing”. Think of the discord caused when musicians play their different instruments, and someone is out of tune or hits an obvious wrong chord. The experience is derailed for a moment and the goal to play beautiful music together is temporarily interrupted. The words ‘exhibiting equivalence’ denote qualities that are comparable. In other words, each entity involved has the same value.

**Think!** *(the following questions assume there is no willful sin involved)*

Is it possible that someone else’s idea may be as good, perhaps even better, than your own?

Does pride keep you from acknowledging the valuable insight and suggestions of others?

Are you as willing to accept direction from others as you are to give it?

What if you really feel your thoughts are right or best yet others cannot agree? Can you concede and be at peace trusting that your vision is not the only one and that ultimately God will direct His purpose?

Are you willing to follow?

1Corinthians 1:10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you **be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

Acts 4:32 And the congregation of those who believed were **of one heart and soul**; and not one [of them] claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.

Romans 12:16 **Be of the same mind toward one another**; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Romans 15:5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be **of the same mind with one another** according to Christ Jesus;

Philippians 3:13-17 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, **be thus minded**: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you; however, let us **keep living by that same [standard]** to which we have attained. *KJV*

How can you seek to be harmonious with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Do you strive to be like-minded in faith based on God’s word, or do you cause disruption and discouragement?

We are not here for our own purpose, pursuits, or pleasure; we are here to work together in unity, as a body of believers, striving for the advance and encouragement of the Gospel. Consider – a group of individuals where the obvious majority agrees on a certain path. You are convinced that your way is best. There is no sin issue involved. What do you do? Are you willing to forego your vision in order to work together? Living in harmony requires sacrifice of self, placing the goal of unity as more important than personal likes or desires.

*Harmony requires the rare art of truly listening and hearing  
someone else's plan, thoughts, or suggestions,  
with a heart attitude that they have something valuable to offer.*

**Be sympathetic** – *sumpathes*, having a fellow-feeling, mutually commiserative, having compassion on one another. 'Friendly fellow feelings' is the descriptive phrase used to define sympathetic in our English dictionary. It is an awareness and understanding for the hardships of others. Synonyms used for this word are large-hearted, charitable, and openhearted. When you put together this description of having feelings and compassion and charity, you quickly recognize that being sympathetic in a true working sense requires some action.

Most charitable organizations are created to help others, to benefit others in some way. A charitable attitude *towards* others is "*a kindly and lenient attitude toward people*", *WordWeb*. **It is an attitude which is quick to think the best, rather than the worst, being willing to overlook mistakes.** This is the opposite of being harsh or cruel. You may be thinking, 'how does sympathy relate to an attitude of overlooking mistakes?'

**Think!** When someone is in an undesirable position because of poor decisions, it can become increasingly difficult to continue to offer sympathy for their hardships and suffering. We can easily judge others without even realizing it. But we need to think of God's sympathy towards us as His children. In general, we mess up all the time; sometimes out of ignorance, sometimes out of defiance. Yet, God continues to pick us up, give us what we need to get back on track, and always extends His lovingkindness. This is true sympathy. He never withholds His mercy towards us. *Let us be as quick to forgive others for their mistakes as we are to forgive ourselves!*

The word for sympathetic is only used in 1Peter 3:8. A closely related word, *sumpascho*, is found in two other places in the New Testament, and is translated *to suffer with*.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed **we suffer with** [Him] in order that we may also be glorified with [Him.]

The second place this word is found is in the account of Paul explaining to the Corinthian church the importance of each member of the body working together.

1Corinthians 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members **suffer with it**; if [one] member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (cf. 1Corinthians 12:20-27).

We show sympathy to those who are struggling when we are able in some way to come alongside them, to walk through their difficulty with them by giving them support, encouragement, and understanding. Picture an unlit area of wilderness you must walk through. Holding hands with another individual through that journey will not change it, but it will make it more tolerable. Often, just by knowing there are others in the midst of the storm with you will cause you to feel more courageous. Sincere offerings of *'It's going to be okay'*, or *'I'm right here with you'*, may be all that is needed for success. When we are able to support one another in sympathy, we all benefit together!

We can apply this by truly desiring to come alongside another's hardships, regardless of our own judgment of their decisions. Remember, it is God who changes hearts and executes wisdom to do His will. *It is not our role to fix others or to continuously point out mistakes; it is our role to be sympathetic.*

**Be brotherly** – from *philadelphos*, fond of brethren, i.e. fraternal: - love as brethren. This word only occurs in this verse. It comes from a combination of *philos*, meaning dear as in dear friend, actively fond or friendly; as a noun it can mean an associate or neighbor, and *adelphos*, a brother either near or remote, much like the first letter of the Greek alphabet 1, occasionally used in the sense of union (*Strong's Greek Dictionary*).

To be fond of someone in this sense is to be partial to them, having a strong preference for them. A fraternity is an organization which has like characteristics. If you think of fraternal twins, they share the same mother at the same time. They are not exactly alike but very closely related. In Christ, we are family. We share in His mercy and grace needed for our eternal redemption. You might think of it this way – we are in a forever fraternity looking to share in the same promise of Heaven.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in **brotherly love**; give preference to one another in honor;

1Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for **a sincere love of the brethren**, fervently love one another from the heart,

1Peter 2:17 Honor all people, **love the brotherhood**, fear God, honor the king.

Often, there is an unspoken bond between siblings in the same family. Even if they are varied in their likes, thinking, and goals, they will come to each other's aide if needed. How much more is our bond in Christ! True identity with Christ will separate you from the world. However, it will join you with the family of Christ. Your purpose and your goal becomes rooted in God's commands and love for you. And one of His commands is to love one another just as He loved us, **giving up ourselves for the benefit of another**. This is brotherly love.

John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

1Thessalonians 4:9-10 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

We are united in the same family, having the same purpose of glorifying God, and the same charge of making disciples. We are to abundantly love one another!

In what specific ways can you show brotherly love towards your family in Christ?

Is it necessary to be in complete agreement with one another in order to love one another?

Be kindhearted – *eusplagchnos*, well compassionate, sympathetic, pitiful, tender-hearted.

This is a considerable or substantial showing of understanding and support. When reading the word pitiful, it helps to think *pity full*. It is being full of sympathy and sorrow for the misfortune of others. This brings us back to the importance of showing understanding and compassion for others, feeling for their suffering, and desiring to help. This same word is translated 'tender-hearted' in Ephesians 4:32.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, **tender-hearted**, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

As we move through Peter's exhortations to believers, it is easy to recognize that having peace and love for one another is a priority; working together, and seeking to be agreeable is highly regarded and honors God. If we seriously invest in developing a sincere love one for another, then we will avoid, as much as possible, being the cause of suffering. Certainly, there is no place for hate toward one another. Take a moment and look forward to Chapter 4 in 1Peter.

1Peter 4:11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.



*“... my brethren, {be} all unanimous, guarding against all unnecessary occasion of contention; be sympathizing, full of brotherly love to all Christians, compassionate to those that are in distress, and friendly to all those that need your assistance”, Doddridge.*

One commentary suggests the translation of being kindhearted is being ready to show mercy. This supports the command in Ephesians 4:32 above. As we move through the conduct of those who seek to follow God, we recognize certain behaviors are closely related and even seem to overlap in their meanings. We must keep in mind this is not a list of things to check off but an overflowing of love which stems from a heart yielded to God. Having defined each characteristic listed in 1Peter 3:8 so far, it would seem difficult to be harmonious without having sympathy, love, and mercy for one another; and all of this would be impossible without humility.

**Be humble in spirit** – *philophron*, literally friendly of mind; kind, courteous. According to one commentary, *“the oldest manuscripts read, ‘humble-minded’. It is slightly different from ‘humble’, in that it marks a conscious effort to be truly humble”*, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown.

Often, our natural reaction to unpleasant circumstances is to place blame somewhere. Responsibility for our actions is then removed and wrong behavior or thinking is excused. We are to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit as a response to our salvation, not as a response to how others treat us or to their own behaviors. In other words, we can be of one mind in our unity of being Christ-followers. We can choose to be sympathetic to those are struggling. We can show love based on our common need of God’s grace and mercy. We can be kindhearted, showing compassion. We need to show grace and humility in our relationships with one another. It is good to remember frequently that it is only because of God that we ourselves are worthy.

**Do you see others through the lens of God’s value placed on them?** Each individual is precious in His sight. Our life is not about us, it is about what Jesus did. I think of Paul’s words to the Colossian church –

**Colossians 3:1-3**, Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

**Colossians 3:12-15** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.