

Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit

Dealing With People Who Wrong You

Life Questions:

Has someone lied about you? Told a lot of people that barely know you superfluous stories about you that you know are not true? Was that person a fellow believer? How do you handle that? Are you allowed to defend yourself and if so, how would defending yourself look?

Everyday of our life we face people who have different priorities than we do. Chances are, you work or attend church with people that are only in it for themselves. How do you know their motivation? Easy, look at their fruit. This entire bible study is meant to direct us to take the things we don't like and use them to make the things God intends for us. Of all the areas a Christian walks, being able to defend oneself is perhaps one of the most misunderstood.

Jim sat in the meeting listening intently to the man speaking to him. Though he had once worked with the man, considered him a friend and knew he was a deacon in his church, the man had proven to be less than a man seeking God's actions in his life. He called Jim a liar, a thief, and made several veiled threats. Already, Jim knew the man had been speaking ill of him, lying to anyone that would listen as the man tried to put himself up to a higher position in the community through standing on others. It was a trick Jim had seen with people who knew the man in the past. While calling Jim a liar, the man had been making trips to people to tell outlandish things about Jim. But it wasn't just Jim, everyone the man dealt with was given a bad name. Each person he worked for held him back, no one knew what he did – no one was in awe of what he did in other words, and no one was able to help him get the recognition he so desperately wanted to make himself feel better about his life. Never did he ever speak positively of anyone. To the man, everyone was simply an obstacle to him getting more recognition and money.

Perhaps you have been in Jim's position. Someone is making false claims against you, calling you names and making you look incompetent, evil or just mean. People that know you, at least some, are willing to defend you but most of them just listen to the man because standing up for the truth is a lot more difficult than just going along.

So are you expected to take it? What do you do about it? How, if at all, do you defend yourself, and does the bible specifically give you the permission to stand up for yourself? In other words, what should you do?

1. Don't allow yourself to be used

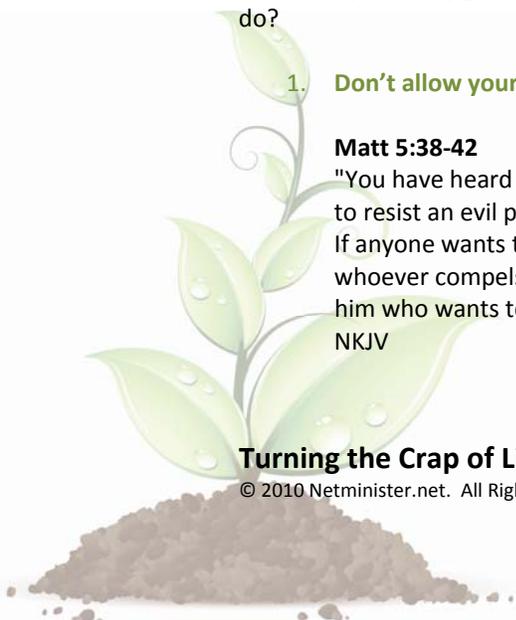
Matt 5:38-42

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

NKJV

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Jesus is talking to us as individuals when he says not to repay something for another thing. When He talks about not resisting the evil person, it means not to repay an outrage with another outrage. The first step in dealing with the situation is being aware of how the scripture is speaking. We do no good by escalating the disagreement that causes the problem. That only makes us as one that is doing the evil in the first place. The NFL is a great place to see this, if you see a player make an illegal move, maybe tackle someone late or throw a punch, it is rarely the guy that went first that gets caught, but the one that retaliates.

Jesus is firstly telling us that our priority should never be to escalate the situation, but to focus on the needs of the person hurting us. Our efforts should be allow patience, probably the worst of the fruits of the spirit in my humble opinion, to take hold in our life. Only with that fruit can we be willing to let the one hurting us have more because we do not need to foster a sense of hate and anger which will only drive us away from Christ, not toward Him.

You think that is tough to do? Darn right it is! And, here is the kicker, it doesn't get any easier. The closer you move to where God wants you to be the more you can expect the enemy to use people, even good deacons at your church and ministry people themselves to do his bidding. Remember, they are not acting in the will of God. How can you know? Is it ever the case in scripture where someone does God's will by going behind someone else? Quite to the contrary, His word tells us that things done in the dark will be brought to the light.

America loves great conspiracy movies. Nothing seems to get the juices flowing like watching a bunch of cigar smoking fellows in a dimly lit room planning some diabolical scheme. From JFK to the movies about 9/11 conspiracies, we all seem to be in enamored with the idea of dark hand moving people around to do their insipid bidding. In truth, that is exactly what is going on. The bible tells us that we do not fight against flesh and blood, that is man or woman, but against principalities and powers – i.e., satan and his minions. When we aren't careful with our witness, we risk becoming one of his pawns knowing that he doesn't care about us, he only wishes to kill and destroy us. That is a far cry from what Christ has for us, in that His will is for our good, for us to have life and have it more abundantly.

When the enemy controls us by using people close to us against us, then he is controlling us. Plain and simple. Who are you allowing to direct your path? Satan because he is using you to make the situation worse or Jesus because He is teaching you patience, perseverance that will help you grow to maturity. And hey, nobody said being mature was easy.

2. **Realize the standard you are held to**

Matt 5:44-47

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

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Love your enemies, is there anything more difficult than loving someone who is abusing you. Now mind you, God is not telling us to be stupid. He says in His word that we have a sound mind, and a sound mind tells you not to allow someone to physically, mentally or emotionally abuse you in a relationship. Nowhere does scripture say that or even hint at it. Anyone who tells you otherwise is mis-using scripture.

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But to those that do, Jesus tells us that we should love our enemies. Love them meaning not in the sense of loving them with a tire iron upside the head, but to love them is the word agape. That is unconditional love. Wow, don't you hate that word being used in that place? But there it is, we are to unconditionally love that person that is our enemy. WHY? Because God sees value in that person even if we do not. He sees them for who He desires them to be, He wants to turn them from their ways – i.e., the way satan has laid out for them, back to His way. Remember, satan came to destroy and that is what he does best. He uses that person to destroy relationships leaving them abandoned by others and lost – the perfect prey for satan.

If you have watched old war movies, you will notice that no one moves alone. When they do they are an easy target for the enemy. All he has to do is point and shoot. Whereas when a unit of soldiers move together, they provide cover and safety for each other. Ultimately, it is easier to go through life with your unit than alone. And while someone can greatly damage your ability to deal with the people you fight with – together that is not against, you must seek to pray for the person and love them unconditionally. Remember, I didn't say this would be easy.

But not only are we suppose to love them unconditionally, and here is where it starts to get tough. Realizing that you are probably thinking, it gets worse? Yes, it does. We should do good to those that hate us, and bless those that spitefully use us. That is our task. Plain and simple, not easy but there it is, we must do it because we are commanded to. Any failure means that we put ourselves against God's will. How far do you think you will get trying to move against God's will?

What it comes down to is if we love God we will keep His commandments according to John 14:15. That means that we must always put ourselves in a position of keeping His commandments even when it is not easy. What you notice is that even if the other person is a Christian, they aren't following His word; they are in grave danger of being judged by God. Don't join them.

3. Defend yourself

Rom 12:14-21

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.20 Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."
21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
NKJV

There it is again. Bless and do not curse. Even the people that are damaging your career or harming your reputation. If you have a problem with that, remember, you can get someone back and probably do a pretty good job of it, but if God gets them back – your effort is definitely in vain. In other words, you can

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pray for the person to change and allow God to get them back OR you can take it upon yourself, doing satan's will and not God's and do a horrible job of destroying your witness in the process.

God's desire is to return a sinning brother, that is you and me too, to Him. Not to destroy him or her like we may want to. We are to be His witnesses that means that we represent Him. The desires of Christ have to be our own desires – i.e., seeking to see our brothers and sisters in Christ come to repentance, not damnation.

The bible tells us that we are God's temple; therefore, if that is true, and we believe it is, then when someone attacks us, they are really attacking God. That means that you are secondary to the enemy's purpose. He doesn't care about you, what he cares about is getting something on God himself. You and I are simply his pawn, but we are God's dwelling place. That is a big difference. God wants to use us to receive glory and grow our relationship with Him to maturity.

Final Analysis: Well it is not easy. As you listen to the lies someone tells about you, the false-statements it is something that grows anger and a desire for revenge, but God forgave us, as such we must be willing to forgive others and follow His word – His commandments. That, as hard as it may be is our job. He promises to take care of the rest. He will deal with a brother that is spreading lies about us, He will defend our character and our reputation because it is His reputation and character being attacked. Are you willing to let Him work, in His own time? Think about it before you commit.



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