

What Do You Do When Others Will Not Do Right?

Have you ever been totally frustrated when people you love, people you work with, people you work for or that work for you don't do right? As a parent nothing is more exasperating than to not be able to get into a child's skin and let them see it the way you can see it. As a spouse, nothing is more heart-breaking than the rejection that accompanies strong disagreements. As a pastor, it hurts and makes you feel personally responsible for behavior contrary to Scripture committed by church members.

So the question is: What do I do when others will not do right?

1. Do the right thing yourself.

Dr. Bob Jones Sr., founder of Bob Jones University used to always say, "It's always right to do right. It's always wrong to do wrong. And it's never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right."

Let us follow the advice of our Christian parents who scolded us if we even looked like we were going to follow the crowd. Obey the admonition of God through His servant Solomon: "*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*" (Proverbs 1:10). May we say with the Psalmist: "*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart*" (Psalm 40:8).

2. Try to be understanding of those who don't do right.

Recently I told the church of a man I pastored many years ago that went out of his way to confront me, battle me, and challenge me. If someone is treating you unnaturally unkind, there may be a good reason. This dear brother of whom I speak later told me, in tears, that he had been conditioned from his youth by someone in authority to never trust a pastor. What a mistake I would have made if I had responded too sharply with this young man. My actions, if not Christ-like, would have only confirmed that we preachers are all alike.

"The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Psalm 145:8). *"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous"* (I Peter 3:8).

We sometimes just don't know what is going on in someone's life, even those we perceive to be close to us. One of the most touching stories that illustrate this is told by Gary Smalley in his book, *The Key to Understanding Your Child's Heart*. He tells that his young son used to often interrupt him when on the telephone. He warned him if he ever did it again, he would be disciplined. Not long afterwards, his son broke into the room where he was on the phone and his son was screaming. Smalley covered the phone, ordering his screaming son to the restroom to wait for him. When he got off the phone, if I recall the incident correctly, he administered a spanking, then asked what did he think was so important that he had to disobey the rule to interrupt Dad while on the phone. Pitifully, the youngster dropped his hand that had gingerly cupped his ear. The dad saw the blood, as his precious little son apologized said, "Daddy, I fell in the bathtub and hurt my ear." At this, our author did the right thing - he tearfully embraced his son and apologized to him. You see, many times we don't know the hurt behind someone's actions.

3. Leave the bridge up that joins you together.

Don't respond in such a way that you "burn the bridges" down that connect you. Many times, I have seen it over and over again: altercations become so heated that, rather than light being given, the "scorched earth" principle of total warfare ends up burning the very bridge that connects you. Beware of ultimatums that say, "If you do this one more time," or "If you don't do this, then I'll..." Let us love unconditionally as God loves us: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are*

killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39). Love based upon the other person's actions will never solve your problems - this is the human way of doing things.

4. Do not take the blame that God did not give you.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20). A natural tendency of many is to completely relieve the person who did you wrong, or even more seriously, offended God, as something you did that "made them" do wrong.

One reason we feel we cannot go on with our life is that we are suffering from such a guilt complex over someone else's misdeeds, and we end up punishing ourselves for their wrongs. Let me caution on something else that is involved at this point. If you convey to the person in the wrongdoing that it is not really their fault, it is something you yourself have done, you have done great harm. You have now given them a license to continue sinning. Do not over-react in such a way, which excuses wrongdoing.

5. Do not transfer your feelings to a surrogate.

When our disappointment escalates to the place where we feel we cannot stand it any longer, we sometimes search for someone to take the place of the one who has hurt you. Don't say to someone else, "Will you be my dad/mom? After all, you have been the parent that I never really had." If a family member feels replaced by a stranger, they will often respond by pulling even further back. The self-pity that drives you to a replacement is not as innocent sounding as it may sound to you and others. It may seem logical, but I fear you have done great harm. Nothing is more tragic when this action is played out in the breaking of the covenant of marriage. When a spouse is traded on for another one, you have torn the one flesh union that God joined together. No marriage is safe when divorce is considered as an option.

When we transfer our feelings that rightly belong to someone else, we are now doing wrong ourselves. Experience the loneliness as an offering to God. Fall back on God's everlasting arms and let Him be your stay and source. Let Him, as only He can, fulfill the emptiness you are experiencing. God said, He would be, "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation" (Psalm 68:5).

Forgive the cliché, but please, "Do your best and hang the rest." Let us do our part and pray and wait on God to get inside the other person to encourage, convict and guide. If God can change a king's heart, he can change the person you love! *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will"* (Proverbs 21:1).

-Pastor Pope-

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