

HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE HURTS FROM OTHERS?

Everyone who reads this article has been hurt by another person in some manner. How do we handle those who mistreat us?

Hurt is certainly a part of everyone's life. The key is how do we respond to the individual who willfully and deliberately seeks to hurt us.

Aware that hurt can be a major stumbling block for the believer, Jesus revealed God's way of handling the problem: "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28).

That runs against the grain of human emotions.

It sure does. But then the Christian life is not portrayed as a natural, spontaneous kind of behavior.

It is life on a higher plane. It is God's way, not ours - always for our good and the benefit of others.

That does not mean we will not feel the pain of others' deeds or words against us. They will sting, but the Christian can respond on a level that is above and beyond his own human tendencies.

Most of us take a defensive posture toward the one who hurts us.

Learning not to defend ourselves is a step toward spiritual maturity. Jesus never defended Himself before His accusers, and He will defend us if we let Him. His example is ours.

If we seek to retaliate, we can become poisoned by bitterness and animosity. When we do, we are the ones who suffer; and that is not necessary if we act according to scriptural guidelines.

We need to turn the hurt into a redemptive opportunity. Revenge or hate destroys that possibility

What can we do about the hostility that builds as we replay the offense?

We must come to the point where we no longer see the offender as our enemy. He is not the real adversary.

The power of sin and Satan are at work in the hearts of all men - believers and unbelievers alike. That does not diminish our responsibility for our actions.

The one who hurt you should not be viewed as the bad guy. We may not know the events and emotions that person experienced when he offended you. He may not be angry at you but just expressing resentment that has developed over the years through other circumstances.

So there often are other underlying causes that explain a person's harmful actions.

That is where the believer can be a part of the redemptive process. By responding in a Godly manner, the Christian may help the offender see the root cause of his behavior.

That is how genuine friendships can come from distressing situations. The guilty party is grateful that you are willing to hang in there and take the abuse until God brings him through his difficulty.

Christ's remedy involves specific actions by the believer.

The Christian must take the initiative, not merely sit back passively. He must decide how he would like to be treated and then act accordingly.

That is the Golden Rule in action. Jesus said we are to “love” our enemies. The Greek word is *agape* which is unconditional, Godlike love.

We are also to think of ways to “do good” to others and even “bless” them by finding something in their lives to compliment.

It can get tough when Jesus tells us to “pray” for those who mistreat us. We know that praying for our enemies is usually the last thing we feel like doing, but prayer is the mightiest weapon the believer has in his arsenal. Great spiritual power is unleashed into the situation when we ask God to use us as His healing instrument.

It is a struggle to implement this kind of behavior, isn't it?

The starting point is genuine forgiveness. Do we

forgive the person who hurt us - with the love and compassion of Christ? Or do we hold him to our performance-based standard?

God forgives us for our spiteful actions, and we are called to forgive others in the same way He forgives us (Luke 17:3-4). We cannot demand repayment from them for their offense; we must forgive them unconditionally.

But making up our minds and having the capacity to love the person who wounds us are not the same.

Our resource for carrying through our decision is understanding that Christ is our Life. He indwells us through His Holy Spirit, and He is able to show mercy and compassion. If we allow Him, He can and will flow through us with His character and nature.

Can Jesus love the person who hurt you? Since

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He abides within you, He can love him through you.

We are not captive to our emotions or temperament - not as long as the living Christ influences our behavior. We are partakers of His divine nature, and His nature is sufficient for every hurt.

Letting Christ live through us transforms our entire outlook on mistreatment. It secures the rewards that Jesus promises to those who act biblically.

When we meet Christ face to face, He will recompense us for our Godly behavior; and that will be worth all the effort. Abuse and hurt give us opportunities to lay up rewards for the future. God uses even our pain to bless us in a magnificent manner.

by Charles Stanley