

Study 17

NO RETALIATION FOR INSULTS

First Peter 2:21-25

"I wish I hadn't said that!" How many times have we all thought that? Usually we do so after having earlier just had an argument or shouting match with someone. Even though Christ used strong words against those who were opposed to Him, He never lowered Himself to a mere exchange of insults.

1. What characteristic of a person qualifies them to be perfect according to James 3:2? (Pr. 17:27)

2. How does Proverbs 10:19 describe someone who guards what they say?

WORDS ARE POWER

The old saying says that sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. The only problem with this is that words do hurt. In fact, words can often hurt more than physical inflictions.

3. Words are power. What example of the power of words do the following Scriptures give?

a) Proverbs 12:25 _____

b) Proverbs 15:1 _____

c) Proverbs 25:11 _____

4. How did Jesus describe His words? (Jn. 6:63)

We are created in the image of a God who spoke the worlds into existence (Heb. 11:3). We have a degree of this creative ability invested in us (because we are created in His image). This is most apparent in the relationship between words and imagination. In some cultures (eg. American Indians), the imagination is considered more real than the tangible. With words we can create things in the imaginations of others. Novelists use this ability. Film producers use this ability. Politicians use this ability. Psychologists use this ability. Creating things with words is an ability we all take for granted. The most positive affect that words can have, is to create faith in people's hearts (Rom. 10:17). This is why God has entrusted to us the responsibility of sharing Christ with others through the use of words.

CHRIST SUFFERED INSULTS

We know that Christ was physically inflicted with pain. But He was also mocked (Matt. 27:29; Lk. 22:63). Jesus even told His disciples that He would be mocked and insulted (Lk. 18:32). We need to note the response of Christ to these unfair insults.

5. In fact, Peter says that we need to do more than just note them. What are we to do with the example that Jesus set in regard to handling insults? (First Peter 2:21)

DISCUSSION SCENARIO

You've had a hard and trying day. You come home to hear your partner complaining about something you forgot to do. This isn't the first time they have done this. You know that they aren't interested in the reason why. They then proceed to angrily state that you must be loosing your grip on reality because this isn't the first time you've done this. Your blood pressure is rising with each insult. "You're hopeless! I don't know why I put up with this! Haven't you got a brain!" And then you...

6. Based firstly on the principle in First Peter 2:21, how should you respond?

PEOPLE CAN BE CRUEL

A gracious Christians was once heard remarking in response to hearing of some wicked person's actions- "There go I, but for the grace of God!". The implication being, that even the best person is contaminated with sin, and is able to commit the most vile acts of wickedness. The fact that some people don't act wickedly has more to do with God's grace, than it does with natural human goodness (Rom. 3:10, 23; Titus 2:11)! So we are not surprised when people act wickedly. Occasionally these people will act cruelly toward us. Our response to their treatment will be a test of our godly character.

7. How did Jesus teach in Matthew 5:39 that we should respond to acts of cruelty against us?

8. How did Jesus lead the way in *showing* us how to respond to acts of cruelty against us?

(1Peter 2:23) _____

CHRIST WAS MORE THAN AN EXAMPLE

Most people, despite their religious backgrounds, acknowledge that Christ was a great man. They may even acknowledge that He did bring a *degree* or *type* of salvation, though it was definitely not the only provision of salvation that "God" has revealed to mankind. As such, they view Christ's sacrifice of Himself as nothing

more than a noble example to all who seek to find the path to salvation. When Jesus said that He was *the* way to God (John 14:6), He actually meant that He was *one of the ways* to God, they claim.

9. But how does 1Peter 2:24 refute this?

10. Compare Isaiah 53:5 with the last part of First Peter 2:24. How do they differ?

Writing to slaves who had possibly been sorely treated by their masters, these words of Peter would have been most appropriate. While having every understandable right to feel bitterness toward their cruel masters who may have physically whipped them, they are reminded of Christ's attitude and then pronounced healed because of Christ.

11. What could this *healing* for Christian slaves encompass?

Allowing bitterness and hatred to enter a believer's heart, is a sure sign of a soul drifting away from the Lordship and character of Christ. By renouncing such things and showing genuine loyalty and submission to authority, despite their treatment of us, we are *returning to the Great Guardian and Shepherd of our souls*.

Amen.