

How to Respond When Someone Hurts You

My 8-year-old daughter, Lindsey, is a kind and generous girl. She has a sweetness about her spirit that could only come from the Lord. She's caring and compassionate, and she's quick to reach out to those in need. Not only that, but she believes the best of everyone with whom she comes in contact.

That's why it was especially hurtful when a neighborhood child stole some toys she had trusted him with.

This child (whom I'll call Bobby) and his siblings frequently played at our house. This time, when he came over, Lindsey let him use some of her things so that he could play in the front yard with Kenny while she and the girls played together in the backyard. All was fine until Lindsey came back to check on her property and discovered it was missing.

Bobby told Lindsey where he had put the property away. Lindsey checked and didn't see it. Believing that she would find it upon closer inspection, she said nothing to me about it until, two days later, a closer inspection revealed that the property was definitely not where Bobby had said it was.

It was gone.

We carefully evaluated what might have happened to it. But when we determined that Bobby was the only one who had access to it, and that it was not where he claimed he had returned it, Lindsey and I went to talk to Bobby and his mother.

During the conversation, Bobby denied the theft but changed his story multiple times. I calmly but firmly pointed out the physical impossibility of some of the things he was claiming, and I shared the reasons for our suspicions that he had taken the cards. Bobby's mother declined to consider anything we

said and became offended that we would think her son might be stealing from us (despite his record of previous, albeit different, offenses against our family). She told us her kids would no longer play with ours because we had suspected him. Unable to make any headway, we calmly thanked her for her time and left quietly.

I was angry. Mess with me, that's one thing; mess with my children, that's quite another. But I knew that the way I handled this incident would serve not only as an example for Lindsey, but for our other children as well. And I knew that Jesus' way is always best, even when it isn't the way I might feel like responding.

So I did my best not only to comfort Lindsey, who was deeply sad (I was too), but also to use this experience to teach her some life lessons.

First, we need to be careful whom we trust. I'm not suggesting that we walk around suspicious of everyone we meet. But when it comes to trusting someone in an important matter, we must be careful whom we choose to trust, because not everyone will prove trustworthy. It may not be wise to trust someone you've just met with your deepest thoughts and feelings; it is definitely not wise to trust someone who has a track record of hurting you.

Second, when people mistreat us, we have a choice as to how to respond. We can either respond in kind and mistreat them right back; or we can choose Jesus' way and be kind to them despite what they've done to us. Yes, we may have to take steps to protect ourselves from them (Bobby wouldn't have been allowed back into our yard or home anyway, even if his mother hadn't prohibited him from coming), but we can still treat them with kindness. It was right for Lindsey and me to go to Bobby's house and try to resolve the issue with him and his mother; it would have been wrong for us to go there and become harsh or disrespectful with our words.

Third—and this is the one I tend to forget—we need to pray for those who have hurt us. “You know, Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies,” I said gently to Lindsey. “We need to pray for Bobby.” “I already have been,” Lindsey said. Not just praying that he would return the property, but praying that God would convict his heart and bring him into a relationship with Jesus. We also prayed together.

Fourth, we need to remember that we ourselves are sinners. Before Lindsey and I went to Bobby’s house, we prayed together. We prayed that God would give us the right words and attitude, and we prayed that Bobby and his mother would respond well. We also thanked God for His forgiveness, which He is willing to extend to all repentant sinners, and which we (not just Bobby) need to receive as well.

Finally, we forgive. Forgiveness does not mean that we say that what the offender did was okay (it wasn’t). Nor do we say that it didn’t hurt us (it did). Nor does it necessarily mean we give him or her the opportunity to do it again (there are times when it is good and right to set boundaries to protect ourselves). What it *does* mean is that we choose not to punish or take revenge against the offender ourselves, but rather leave that up to God and/or the legal system.

It’s hard to react rightly when someone has sinned against us, and especially when that person doesn’t admit the offense or isn’t sorry. But by responding the way Jesus would have us respond, we not only please the Lord and bring Him glory, but we also benefit ourselves. That’s because God blesses those who follow Him and His ways with spiritual blessings, not the least of which is His “peace that passeth understanding” (Phil. 4:7, KJV).

Don’t trade the peace and other spiritual blessings you could be experiencing for the temporary and only partial satisfaction of staying angry or taking revenge. Trust God that what He has planned for you in the wake of the sin that’s

been committed against you is far better than what you could devise for yourself.

Luke 6:28—Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which spitefully use you.

*Adapted from **Megan Breedlove's** blog, Manna for Moms. Megan is the author of Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy and Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.*