

The Christian Response to Toxic People

Almost everyone has been involved with or experienced a toxic relationship at some point in their life. You may be in a toxic relationship right now that has affected you adversely. There are many misunderstandings about the Christian response in such situations.

I was raised in a conservative, Christian home. I was taught to turn the other cheek no matter what the other person said or did. I became more of a doormat, thinking I was a great Christian. The Scriptures are clear that we should love our neighbors, our spouses and even our enemies. So biblically, we should love toxic people.

Love, however, does not mean enable. We can love people by setting healthy boundaries. Many Christians, because of their love and compassion, end up having their boundaries trampled. They love and forgive as they should, but their boundaries are continually violated. On one hand, they show the love of Christ. On the other hand, they feel stressed and anxious because of the internal conflict between forgiveness and allowing unhealthy behavior. God is not an enabler. To enable, in simple terms, means to take away another person's natural consequence.

Remember that God can use natural consequences to teach and ultimately redeem us. I think many Christians mix up love, compassion and mercy and end up enabling toxic people. When we enable a poisonous person, we take away their responsibility for their behavior. We can get in the way of what God wants to do in their life. Everyone is affected by toxic people.

In Episodes 49 and 50 of *Self Talk* on the Charisma Podcast Network, Dr. Self will get down to the nitty-gritty about how

we can respond in a healthy way to toxic people. If you are in a toxic relationship, these two episodes will help you restore some sanity to your life. {eoa}

Dr. Ray Self is the president of The International College of Ministry. Do you have a desire to be a professional Christian counselor? Apply now for your Spirit-filled, accredited online college degree at Dr. Self's latest book is Hear His: Voice Be His Voice, available at . For comments or questions, email Dr. Self at drrayself@. {eoa}