

What to Do When You've Been Wronged

A visitor to Yellowstone National Park observed grizzly bears feeding. The park service guide explained that the grizzly bear can whip any animal in the West with the exception of the buffalo and the Kodiak bear.

Later the visitor noticed the grizzly allowed one animal to eat with him—the skunk. Could the bear have taken on the skunk and won? By all means. He probably resented the skunk for barging in on his meal, but he did not attack the skunk. Why? He knew the high cost of getting even. It would not be worth it.

Most of us have not learned that important lesson. David had.

Psalms 35 contains David's reflections on human skunks. Persons he had once befriended (v. 12) now fought against him (v. 1), sought his life and plotted his ruin (v. 4), built a trap for him to fall in (v. 7), ruthlessly made false accusations (vv. 11,20), jeered and mocked him (v. 15), gloated over his calamity (vv. 19,21,25), and considered themselves better (v. 26). These heartless persons were the very ones he had helped (v. 12). He wept and mourned with them in their grief (vv. 13,14), but they gleefully attacked him in his hour of need.

Sting of rejection

David smarts from the harsh sting of such rejection, made all the more biting because "they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me . . . my enemies without cause . . . who hate me without reason" (vv. 7,19). Jesus experienced in a more intense degree what David expressed: "But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill

what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason’” (John 15:24,25). Has anyone ever done this to you?

You went out of your way with loving-kindness only to be repaid with insult and injury. How did you respond?

Pain relief

Psalm 35 is not a comprehensive guide for dealing with people who have wronged us. But it does contain one indispensable ingredient for handling undeserved hurt—take your pain to the Lord.

If David had had the advantage of Jesus’ teachings, he could have added to Psalm 35 Jesus’ instructions for overcoming evil with good:

1. Love your enemies
2. Do good to those who hate you
3. Bless those who curse you
4. Pray for those who mistreat you
5. Displace negative actions against you with positive responses of well-doing
6. Don’t expect to be rewarded by your enemies for treating them kindly
7. Don’t condemn others
8. Forgive
9. Be generous with your love and life. (See Luke 6:27–38.)

Can we do all the above without feelings of hurt, pain, or anger? How do we process those emotions?

David’s example tells us – tell the Lord how you feel and ask for His help.

You can ask God to deal with the person who acted unfaithfully or unjustly: “Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me” (v. 1). David does not pray: “Help me beat up those who beat me.” He leaves

resolution of the matter in God's hands.

God will take up our cause when we are helpless. Like David, sometimes we find ourselves at a weak place where another has true advantage over us – and the sting hurts badly because that individual or group was someone we really trusted, and the bonds of family or friendship were deep.

Song of hope

David, however, does not permit his emotions to reign over his trust in the Lord. Despite sorrow and anguish over being betrayed, he sings the truths that cannot be shaken: the Lord is our salvation (v. 3), none is like the Lord who rescues the poor and needy (v. 10), He delights in the well-being of His servant (v. 27), and He can be counted upon to act since He is righteous (vv. 24,28).

Can you avoid attacking the skunk? Will you let God deal with him or her instead? Fight the temptation to retaliate and rely on the Lord's help. Let Him handle the difficulty and express David's confidence in God's care: "Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation. My whole being will exclaim, 'Who is like you, O Lord?' . . . My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long" (vv. 9,10,28).

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