

Why Your Best Defense Isn't a Good Offense After All

Thirty-five years ago, I stopped a pickpocket. It happened on Nassau Street in lower Manhattan as I watched a man match his stride with a woman in front of him. When he was close enough, he reached into her side coat pocket from behind and lifted out her wallet.

She was clearly oblivious to what was happening, so I said something. Actually, I shouted something. It wasn't very profound. More on the order of, "Hey, you! That's not yours! Give it back!"

The victim stopped and turned around. The thief did the same. Then he called out something I'll never forget. "Mind your own business!"

That's right. He chastised me for interfering with his "business."

I had forgotten about that incident until recently. Before I canceled my landline, I received a steady stream of scammer calls. You know, the ones where someone calls from "Windows" and says they've seen "suspicious activity" on your then they offer to help.

The frequency of these calls was beyond annoying. No matter what I said or did, I couldn't stop them. So I confess to having a little fun at their expense. If I couldn't stop the calls, it gave me a tiny bit of satisfaction to cause them grief, too. So I might have pretended to be deaf and make them repeat themselves umpteen times before I hung up. Or I might have feigned cluelessness about owning a computer, so how could they have received notification of suspicious activity?

But one call stands out from all the others. The scammer call

came (again) and I messed with the caller (again). This time, his response left me speechless—and reminded me of the pickpocket from 35 years ago. When he realized I wasn't falling for his line, he chastised me for wasting his time! He had called me for fraudulent purposes, intending to scam me, yet he had the nerve to say *I* was wasting *his* time?

Clearly the pickpocket and the scammer both subscribed to the philosophy, "The best defense is a good offense."

Then I thought of how I often respond when I'm under the Holy Spirit's conviction. Yup. The best defense is a good offense:

—Lord, I know I'm supposed to forgive, but what she did is so much *worse!*

—Lord, if I don't get this job, then it's *your* fault if I can't pay my bills.

—Lord, I know you said I need to put others' interests ahead of my own, but if you want me to glorify you, I *need* that opportunity.

Sigh. What I *need* is humility. I need to call my behavior what God calls it. Unforgiveness is sin. Pride is sin. Selfishness is sin. The best defense is not a good offense. The best defense is humility and surrender to the Holy Spirit. Because, in reality, I have no defense of my own for sin. I only have the payment made by Jesus Christ on my behalf.

My best defense is my *only* defense. His name is Jesus. {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .