

Wise Ways to Pray for the Person Attacking You on Social Media

The first time it happened, I assumed it was an anomaly.

When I was approached and asked if a recent Facebook post was targeting me, I was certain it wasn't. I assumed this man was just working through some things in his faith. It was an anomaly, if anything.

It turned out to be just the beginning.

The whispers of conversations he was having with others began reaching my ears. Accusations began being tossed around—I was “soft on sin,” “uncommitted to God's Word,” “all grace and no truth.” Accusation that the reason our church was growing was not our gospel-centeredness, but our corruption by culture. It became a constant caustic barrage.

Surprisingly, these actions had no negative impact on our church. Sure, there were a few awkward conversations. But it's really been no big deal to our church—but, personally? Well, that's a different story.

At night, I'd check his Facebook profile to see what he was saying. I'd go to sleep praying imprecatory prayers. Even after I blocked him, I'd causally ask members of my staff about his latest post, pretending not to care. All the while, it was eating me up inside.

Everyone I trust in my life was reminding me that this person had no credibility, that his accusations were baseless. I'd lean into those words and trust their clear thinking. But one word from him, and the emotions would rush in. This went on for months. I would listen to the criticism, get hijacked and

then remind myself of the words of my friends. It was a privately tumultuous time.

Then, the true dysfunction was revealed. The real issue had nothing to do with whom I was listening to or believing. It was that I was listening at all. It turns out that listening to the voice of a critic or leaning into the words of encouragers can be different sides of the same coin. Aren't both symptoms of overdependence on the approval of people?

Paul said in Galatians 1:10, "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? For if I were still trying to please men, I would not be the servant of Christ."

Allowing the weight of anyone's words, positive or negative, to have significant impact on my emotions doesn't just reveal a dysfunction in my thinking—it reveals a deficiency in my devotion. As Timothy Keller wrote in *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*: "True gospel-humility means I stop connecting every experience, every conversation, with myself. In fact, I stop thinking about myself. The freedom of self-forgetfulness. The blessed rest that only self-forgetfulness brings."

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord to reveal ways that people's words, both positive and negative, might have more weight in your life than the words of Jesus.
- Seek the Lord for the strength to live today out of what He has already spoken over you in the past.
- Open the door of freedom by forgetting about yourself; stop trying to look good or be right.

*Reprinted with permission from The Foursquare Church. **Brad Williams** serves as the lead pastor of Summit Church (Spokane III Foursquare Church) in Spokane, Washington, and as associate supervisor of the North Pacific District of The*

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