

Think Twice Before Rebuking Someone

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44, NIV).

Sometimes love means letting things go. Love “covers a multitude of sins,” as 1 Peter 4:8 (MEV) says.

Other times love requires us to confront. If someone is doing something that will be their undoing and destruction, the most loving thing in the world is to confront them. But it is doing so with hope for the person being confronted, without bitterness, in an effort to not defeat them but to bring them to repentance. The issue is never our victory as much as God’s glory.

This takes wisdom and discernment. Since our own hearts are so prone to pride and anger, we must be sure that our desire to rebuke is truly a prompting of the Holy Spirit and therefore an act of love, and not one of vengeance that would be better left in the Lord’s hands. So we are not called, as John Calvin writes, to imitate God’s judgment upon sin, because that belongs to him alone. Rather, we are called to “imitate his fatherly goodness and liberality.” Love is our response to injustice; it’s not vengeance. Believers are marked by a life of love and are known as Christ’s disciples by their love (John 13:35).

The point of Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:44 is to challenge conventional wisdom, “to live on a level above that of ordinary decent people,” and to take our cues not from the culture but from our Father in heaven. This does not mean we ignore injustice and avoid confrontation. But it might mean that, in some situations, we keep our mouths shut and leave things in the Lord’s hands. Other times, it doesn’t mean this.

But no matter what, the heart that is led by the Holy Spirit is led not by hatred, but by love, which bears all things, believes all things and hopes all things.

Lastly, this allows us in the end leave people in the hands of God. There is a day when we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for our life. Loving someone today does not negate or diminish the reality of that tomorrow. It gives them an opportunity to know him today so that change can come before it's too late on Judgment Day.

Whom do you need to forgive so you can move on with your life and allow them to do the same?

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