

# How to Respond When Misjudged and Reviled

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**Question:** What biblical advice would you give to someone who feels that another Christian has misjudged their character? If someone brings some of your actions which you think are unintentional to your attention, and you just don't agree about their judgment, what is the biblical and loving way to proceed? What advice would you give to both parties involved?

**Phil:** Well, that would depend on the situation actually. You know, I would say, try not to take those things too seriously because Christ was misjudged by everybody and reviled by people. And Scripture specifically says, follow in His steps, Who when He was reviled, did not revile in return. He just entrusted Himself to God. So that would be the heart of my example. Most situations like that you just have to entrust to the Lord. People misjudge me all the time. And it's a natural, but I think fleshly tendency to want to defend yourself.

You see this in the Apostle Paul who hated to defend himself because he knew it was ungodly to do that. And yet, there were times in the Corinthian church where he had to defend himself because false teachers were undermining his authority, and that, in turn, undermined the church's confidence in the Gospel that they had learned from Paul. So he had to defend himself, and he says that repeatedly. You forced me to boast. I hate doing this. I don't want to defend myself. In 1 Corinthians 12, where he talks about the thorn in his flesh, just before he gets to the thorn, he's answering guys who said well, we have more of an inside track to divine revelation than Paul. We know more than Paul taught you. There's stuff that Paul didn't teach you that we need to enlighten you about because we have a superior revelation. And Paul answers them by saying let's talk about superior revelations. And he says, "I know a man..." He doesn't say it's him, but you know it is. "I know a man who was caught up into the third heaven, and he saw things that aren't even lawful to talk about." And you think, ok, here it comes. He's going to tell us what he saw in heaven or what he heard in heaven and he doesn't. He just moves on to the next subject: the thorn in his flesh. Because it was sufficient for him to say, look, if I wanted to, I could prove that I have had more astonishing privileges - spiritual privileges and revelations - than any of these guys who call themselves "super apostles." He said I'm far above the super apostles, but I'd rather talk about my infirmities, and then he talks about the thorn in the flesh.

And one of the things he's saying there is that it's not a good thing to reflexively defend yourself. Sometimes, in fact, most of the time, when we are wronged by being misjudged or our reputation is damaged by something somebody says about us or to us, the right thing is not to revile in return, but just entrust it to the Lord. He'll sort things out in the end. Now, if it affects your reputation in a way that it damages the truth, then you need to set the record straight. And it's always right to do that as well. But what I wouldn't want to do is get into a prolonged conflict with someone over his misjudgment of my character, unless he's using that to lead lots of other people astray. Then, you might have to defend yourself to defend the truth. But if it's just a personal conflict between you and someone else, the right thing to do - that's when it's right to

turn the other cheek. Jesus said turn the other cheek. He's not saying that if somebody came into this church like they did last week and shot up the congregation, the right thing to do would just be (incomplete thought). If you have the means to preserve life and defend against something like that, that's not the time to turn the other cheek. But when Jesus was talking about turning the other cheek, He's talking about personal insults and personal conflicts. And in those intensely personal wars that often end up ripping churches apart, those are the times when it's right to just turn the other cheek. Who cares if the guy misjudged my motives? God knows my motives. He knows my conscience. And that's all that matters is what God thinks about it.

**Jeremy:** That's a wise, pastoral answer.