

# **MISTREATED AND MISUNDERSTOOD**

Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll by Mark Beard 1997

## **Text: I Peter 1:6-7 & 2:18-23**

"Seat belts and air bags have gone along way toward protecting lives in collisions. But there's no patented safety device that will protect us in one of life's most common collisions -- misunderstandings.

They can happen anywhere at anytime. Someone misjudges our motives or misreads our actions, and it can take days, months, and even years to repair the damage. Provided, of course, that the relationship wasn't completely totaled to begin with... (Swindoll, 11)

When I think of people who where misunderstood and mistreated Joseph comes to mind. His family was filled with misunderstandings and hurtful actions. His life in Egypt was filled with misunderstandings and ill treatment. But in the end God caused him to triumph! And who better to understand how a person can try to do right and still suffer for it than Jesus Christ? He was misunderstood by the Pharisees, the Scribes, and the people that He taught. And to add to the emotional hurt of being rejected and mocked --they crucified Him. Even some members of His family had their doubts about His sanity for a while.

As a Christian who finds his or herself in such a situation we might wonder what should we do? What should be the proper response from someone who wants to please God?

## **I. CONSIDER THE SOURCE.**

### **A. There are those who will never treat anyone right.**

We must ask ourselves concerning some people, "Is this someone with whom I want to associate?"

There's some good advice that says, "The company you keep will determine the trouble you meet."

## **B. There are those who never intended you any harm.**

There is always the possibility that we cannot take criticism, good or bad, graciously. As much as we do not like to admit it, sometimes the only problem is with ourselves.

## **II. FOCUS ON THE TRUTH.**

### **A. If you are in the right be confident.**

Live a life that will glorify God. Walk with your shoulders squared and your eyes on heaven.

V.20 of our text tells us, "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently this is commendable before God.

God will bless you for doing what is right even when you are being treated wrong.

### **B. If you are in the wrong be repentant.**

The truth is that we could be imagining that we are being mistreated.

**Someone wrote**, "For well over 2,000 years the world's great religions have taught the virtues of a trusting heart. Now there is another reason to heed the wisdom of the ages: scientific evidence indicates that those with trusting hearts will live longer, healthier lives. Nearly every American is aware that Type A people are impatient, driven and easily moved to hostility and anger. The driving force behind hostility is a cynical mistrust of others. If we expect others to mistreat us, we are seldom disappointed. This generates anger and leads us to respond with aggression."

### **III. WATCH YOUR ATTITUDE.**

#### **A. Don't let the critics get you down.**

The late Herman Hickman, great football coach at Tennessee, Army, and Yale, said, "When you are being run out of town, get to the head of the line and look as if you are leading the parade. (Maxwell, 122)

#### **B. Don't become angry and vengeful.**

Someone said, "Your temper is like a fire. It gets very destructive when it gets out of control.

### **IV. STAY IN TOUCH WITH OBJECTIVE, SPIRITUALLY MINDED PEOPLE.**

#### **A. We need others to help us with our perspective.**

John Maxwell had this to say on the subject, "Enough quality time with positive people will minimize the effect of negative criticism. It will also discourage you from being critical. When the hawk is attacked by crows, he does not counterattack. Instead, he soars higher and higher in ever widening circles until the pests leave him alone. Circle above your adversaries rather than battle with them. (Maxwell, 125)

#### **B. We need other to encourage us -- and we them.**

## V. SEE THE TRIAL AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW.

### A. What doesn't kill you will make you stronger.

"Trusting in Him doesn't protect us from being hit with misunderstandings, but it will enable us to survive them, to repair the damage, and to heal the wounds through forgiveness." (Swindoll, 17)

### B. God allows trials in our lives in order to teach us and to help us to grow.

Scott Peck writes in *The Road Less Traveled*, What makes life difficult is the process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one.... Yet is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meanings. Problems are the cutting edge that distinguishes between success and failure. Problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed, they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually."

## CONCLUSION

**In his excellent book *Forgive and Forget*, Lewis Smedes grapples with tough issues spawned by misunderstandings. Issues like whether or not to forgive people who refuse to acknowledge their wrong.**

"When someone hurts us meanly, we want him to suffer too. We expect this clod to pay his dues; we want him to grovel a little. The old-fashioned word for what we want is repentance.

But the people who hurt us do not always come through. The question is: should we forgive them anyway? Does it even make sense to forgive someone who would rather we keep our forgiveness and feed it to the dog?"

Is there someone like that in your life? Will you forgive them anyway? If you're like most, each time the thought occurs, your sense of justice violently objects. "But it's not fair!" And it isn't. This other person doesn't deserve to be forgiven. But what about what's fair to you? Have you thought about that lately? Perhaps Lewis Smedes can help.

He writes, "Recall the pain of being wronged, the hurt of being stung, cheated, demeaned. Doesn't the memory of it fuel the fire of fury again, reheat the pain again, make it hurt again? Suppose you never forgive, suppose you feel the hurt each time your memory lights on the people who did you wrong. And suppose you have a compulsion to think of them constantly. You have become a prisoner of your past pain; you are locked into a torture chamber of your own making.....

The only way to heal the pain that will not heal itself is to forgive the person who hurt you. Forgiving stops the reruns of pain.....

When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumor out of you inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself."