



fleĵ: to grow the plumage necessary for flight



Turning the Other Cheek (part 3) Loving Confrontation

In the *last fledge* we talked about how the most important part about turning the other cheek is to admit you've been slapped. Admit it to yourself, to God, but not necessarily to the offender. That's how David handled his pain. He told God again and again how he was being hurt by his enemies (see Psalm 17:8-15).

Most of the people who have hurt me are not able to hear about my side of the pain. I have to be careful of telling them my feelings too quickly or too rashly. People who hurt others have their own justification (I didn't realize THAT hurt you!), their own excuses (Oh, I was just crabby that day), their own denial (You made that up) and their own list of hurts (my boss just yelled at me so you can't expect me to be ready to listen to you).

The person who hurt you may have no idea of the pain you're sitting in.

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The person who hurt you may have no idea of the pain you're sitting in. That's what makes an emotional slap all the more difficult both to admit and then to confront. Because emotional slapping isn't as visible, it's harder to find witnesses to validate you, as in "I saw when Sandy back-handed you yesterday." That's why admitting it is key.

After you've admitted the pain both to yourself and to God, there are some "turn the other cheek" ways to respond.

Begin with yourself. Would you like to tell them how they hurt you? Good, that would be an appropriate beginning. Now the hard question, why do you feel motivated to tell them? Would it make you feel vindicated, like you got your say in, like you told them off? If so, then you are not turning the other cheek, you are giving them a piece of your mind and calling it "honest confrontation."

It is not your responsibility to tell people all the emotions you feel, that is not what "turning the other cheek" means. Jesus, who taught and embodied sacrificial love, chose to open up his soul with only a few people. He often taught in parables on purpose so only certain people would get his teaching (Mk 4:33-34). He refused to do miracles where people



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wouldn't believe him (Mt 13:58). Jesus didn't trust every person because "He knew all men" he knew what was in their souls (John 2:24-25). We need to be like Jesus and see what's in people's souls before we rush to confront.

Ask yourself, "Does this person have the maturity to handle an honest confrontation?" In other words is this a foolish or a wise person? How will you know? One way is to watch them interact with authority figures (their boss, government figures like the police, older family members). It will take time to notice what they do when they're faced with unpleasant truth about themselves. Have you ever seen them willing to admit their fault? If not, then why would they suddenly become humble and open to your criticism?

This person may not have the depth of soul to know what to do with your confrontation. And to be so vulnerable as to share how they hurt you will probably worsen the situation both for you and them. You will be giving them truth about you (That hurts me, please don't do it again) that they may then use against you. You might compare it to Jesus' warning to not throw pearls into a pig pen because if you do they will trample it and then turn and tear you into pieces (Matt 7:6). Jesus isn't saying that



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pigs are worthless as much as he's saying pigs don't know what to do with pearls, neither do fools know what to do with truth.

Does the person have the maturity to handle an honest confrontation?

Can this person handle truth about your feelings?

Maybe they can. Maybe they are humble when corrected and willing to admit their wrongs. If so then you must gird yourself with wisdom. You will need to tell them how they hurt you without

- *blaming them as a bad person*
- *telling them how much they've made you suffer*
- *demanding that they change*

Can you do that?

If you are ready to confront them, choose beforehand what you will not say. The most helpful confrontations and the ones that show the world that you are a Christ follower are the ones that focus on your feelings. Confrontation is about airing truth, not punishing the wrongdoer. Here's an example.



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Lauren, two weeks ago I felt really horrible after something that happened between us...

(((Focus on how the situation affected you.)))

...When you said this and this...

(((Be as close to the original quote as possible.)))

...I felt belittled and ignored, whether you intended to hurt me or not...

(((Don't be surprised when they interrupt or defend themselves. Be prepared to ask them to please let you finish.)))

...I thought you would want to know how I felt after that interaction. I was hurt and disappointed.

(((No blaming, like "YOU hurt and disappointed me!")))

How do you befriend this offender without revealing so much that they take advantage of you?

Now, it is time to listen to them. They may be floored that you took time to be so vulnerable and share how their actions

hurt you. They may be utterly uncomfortable and do something inconsistent with their character. Once I



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shared my feelings with someone I respected and loved. Before I could finish they turned around and insulted me in front of everyone. That taught me two things. First, I hadn't understood their soul before confronting. They were uncomfortable with emotions and sharing feelings. Two, I had not gauged the situation well enough to realize that sharing emotions with them was like offering my hand to a crocodile. Sure you can make a mistake, but now I knew. I would not offer my other hand. I want to keep my hands. I need to keep my hands. They are gifts from God.

That doesn't mean you cut off having a relationship with them. You just realize that this person is limited. You cannot share the deep, good, soul stuff with them. Jesus didn't ask Judas to be with him in those special times like on the Mountain of Transfiguration. Jesus didn't bring all the Pharisees into his cozy group of disciples. He knew they couldn't handle it. Jesus actually held himself back from certain people. You may need to do that, too.

If you find yourself in a situation of being insulted and hurt again, or overlooked and belittled, then you have to work overtime with your soul. You have to release the pain, to forgive and to move on while being responsible with your gifts. You will have to



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do double work to show love to this person. And you may (if the situation is abusive and preventing you from being responsible with your gifts) have to draw some boundaries to legitimately protect yourself and your gifts.

For now, something to focus on is friendship. How can you befriend this offender without revealing so much that they take advantage of you? How can you love them without giving them opportunity to hurt you? If you can do this then you're protecting them, too. Every time a person maliciously intends to hurt, they become a worse person. Don't give them opportunities to slap. This may mean completely avoiding them, but it usually means treating them with steady, intentional kindness, much like you would love a hurt child. Children who are in pain need protection, not just from biting or hitting other children, but also from themselves. Hurt children, like unkind people, are behaving foolishly.

Can you spend time with this person, without listing your hurts and still forgive her? Could you offer to help her when she gets hurt? Perhaps you're unable to do that. If so, then you can begin to turn the other cheek by working into forgiveness.



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Absorb her painful words and unkind actions long enough to wring out all your bitterness with Jesus. He wants you to absorb the evil, but not to keep it. Imagine how soggy we'd be with bitterness if we only absorbed evil. Our God doesn't want drippy abused doormats for his children. He wants you to wring out. Let him take your burden.

It will probably be a regular process of wringing out with him, but you are growing into forgiveness. Forgiving is often a thing that needs upkeep, like always checking your email where you always have a new message in your inbox. Some messages, as you well know, are only good for one thing—the trash bin.

Turning the other cheek is about knowing and loving those who don't know how to stop hurting themselves. It's

Turn the other cheek and you participate with Jesus.

a counter-cultural way to end karma, the belief that all "bad luck" is just payback for your own evil. Karma ends with the grace and forgiveness of Jesus. When you absorb another person's evil you protect them from hurting themselves and you. You have an opportunity to be Jesus to them, to carry their burdens and to offer your life as one place their evil



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will stop. Turn the other cheek and you participate with Jesus. Jesus gave us the key for ending the cycle of hurting others. Jesus gives both you and the offender a chance to walk into the abundant life. You can both become appropriately human.

If you enjoyed this *fledge* pass it on to a friend and let us know at mail@soulation.org.

Got questions/comments?

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Bring any question or puzzling life situation



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