

Words of Truth

When Neighbors Attack

By: Brian A. Yeager

Imagine yourself standing outside your home. For the tenth time in three days you witness your neighbor's child hitting your vehicle with his ball. You've talked with the "man of the house" who promised to cause the problem to cease, but nothing has been done. Now, having it happen again and again, you choose to approach your neighbor again. Your neighbor and his wife respond to your gentle request with foul language and threats of physical violence. What do you do?

Before I get into the biblical answer to this question, let's be clear about a couple of things. First off, threats of violence should always be taken seriously and we should avoid harm to ourselves when possible (Matthew 10:23, Acts 8:1-4, Acts 9:24-25, Acts 13:50-51, Acts 14:5-7, and Acts 17:5-10). We are to be aware of harm that may come to us. Secondly, when unavoidable, unprovoked violence comes our way, we must defend ourselves. We have to examine whether or not God authorizes self-defense. The word of God does give us the right of self-defense (Exodus 22:2-3, Luke 11:21, and Luke 22:36). Secondly, we have to obey civil laws that do not conflict with God's laws (I Peter 2:13-16 and Acts 5:29). The state of Texas gives us the right of self-defense (<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/docs/PE/htm/PE.9.htm>). Thus, when it is **impossible** to flee or avoid physical conflict, we may defend ourselves. **(Read the law for details)**.

Having made it clear that Christians are not doormats to be walked all over. We have to consider what we are to do when we are attacked, but physical harm is not going to take place. Should we shout back? Should we get into arguments wherein we trade insults? Should we "man up" and knock out the punks who "deserve" to be punished? Let's see what the Bible says.

Should We Get Into Verbal Arguments In Carnal Matters?

We all should know that we are to defend the truth (I Timothy 6:12 and Jude 3-4). One exception to fighting for the faith is when the questions are foolish and intending to cause carnal strife (II Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9-10). Additionally, when people ignore the truth we are commanded to cease those discussions (Matthew 7:6 and Matthew 10:14). The rules for carnal arguments are much more simple. We shouldn't be involved in such arguments at all (II Corinthians 10:3-4).

What happens when they insult us over and over again? Brethren, we are expected to give answers to people without trying to provoke them (Proverbs 15:1-2). Among other things we should not do, we should not engage in "jesting" (Ephesians 5:1-5). Jestings is witticism (i.e. smart comebacks). Notice these Scriptures: *"Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee... A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good"* (Proverbs 3:29 and Proverbs 16:29).

We all know the carnal side of us burns when we're insulted. It is easy to forget that we are

supposed to be past that carnal man (Romans 6:3-16). We must remember that we are strong in the sight of God when we avoid temptation (Matthew 26:41 and I Peter 3:9-12). The man or woman inside of us belongs to God. We gave up “proving who we are” when we decided to live Christ (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23, I Corinthians 6:20, Galatians 2:20, and Colossians 3:1-4). This includes the physical action we might want to take to prove we are men and women of strength in this world.

Should We Allow Ourselves To Be Provoked Into Physical Fighting?

Okay, your neighbor now deserves a “beat down”. By whose definition is that true? God says we are supposed to take insults and turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). Furthermore, it is the peacemakers who are the children of God (Matthew 5:9). The word of God tells us that if it is possible, we are to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18). That does infer that there may be times wherein peace is not possible. That does not mean we cease to pursue peace. We should always pursue peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14). Yet, it still remains that there are those who refuse to be at peace. They will provoke us. They will call us things (Matthew 5:10-12). They may allow their dog to fertilize our lawn. Should we seek revenge?

Should We Allow Ourselves To Be Provoked Enough To Seek Revenge?

Notice the following Scriptures that answer this question: *“Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work... Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same... Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Proverbs 24:29, Matthew 5:43-46, and Romans 12:19-21).

If you will take this article as a lesson about how we treat our neighbors who attack us, you must consider that we are to love our neighbors (Leviticus 19:18, Zechariah 8:17, Matthew 19:19, Mark 12:31, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8). In fact, we are supposed to work no ill towards our neighbors (Romans 13:9-10). Therefore brethren, we should not seek to be vengeful when our neighbors mistreat us.

Conclusion

When our neighbors (or anyone else) attack us, in a way that does not require self-defense, we should not attack back (Psalms 34:13-14 and I Peter 2:20-23). We are faithful people living in a world of sin (Galatians 1:4 and I John 5:19). We know that people will carnally hate us because we are lights (Philippians 2:15-16) shining in a dark world (Luke 6:22, John 3:19-21, John 15:18-21, and I John 3:11-13). In considering these things, we should all realize that we are to avoid those people who would seek to get us into confrontations (Proverbs 4:14-16 and I Thessalonians 5:22).

In conclusion, consider this Scripture: *“He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace”* (Proverbs 11:12).