

As we have discussed, being the subject of reviling, slander, or gossip can be shattering, humiliating, heartbreaking, sickening, dispiriting and crushing. God, however, does not allow us to respond in kind. 1 Pet 3:8-9; 1 Cor 4:12. Rather, we must respond in a sound or healthy way that is beyond reproach. Titus 2:7-8. The devil is looking for anything He can use to harm our influence for good. Neh 6:12-13. We must not give him any legitimate reason to speak evil of us. Titus 2:7-8.

**When people say damaging things about us, we must respond with ...**

**1. Humility.**

A. We do the same thing. Ecc 7:21-22.

B. We may have been stumbling blocks. 1 Pet 4:14-16. This does not excuse their damaging words, but they are easier to take righteously if we acknowledge that they might not have said what they did if we had not given them something to talk about.

**2. Thankfulness.** Not everything that happens is good, but good can come from anything that happens. Rom 8:28; 1 Thes 5:16, 18. Some potential blessings.

A. Spiritual exercise and growth. Jam 1:2-4.

B. Self-awareness.

1) Revilers, slanderers, and gossips are often brutally honest, but at least they are honest.

2) They are not afraid to hurt us with the truth and there is usually some truth in all criticism.

3) If we find it and learn something it is definitely a blessing.

4) As one person put it, "Remember, haters gonna hate, but even they sometimes hate for reasons worth considering."

5) My greatest growth has occurred when people have said critical but undeniably true things about me and have forced me to see myself, not as I imagined myself to be, but as I really was. It was then and only then I could start changing from what I really was to what I imagined myself to be.

**3. Realism, patience, perspective, and joy.**

A. People are not sinlessly perfect and we must quit expecting them to be what they are not. Ecc 7:20; Rom 3:23; Jam 3:2; 1 John 1:8, 10.

B. People who say damaging things about us are ignorant and arrogant. 1 Tim 6:4. They need ...

1) Compassion, not wrath. Luk 23:34; Eph 4:26-27, 29, 31-32; 1 Pet 2:12.

2) Conciliation, not implacability (an unwillingness to be appeased). 1 Cor 4:13 (NKJV "being defamed, we entreat). Conciliate, "stop (someone) from being angry or discontented; placate; pacify ... reconcile; make compatible ... Conciliate implies the use of arbitration or compromise to settle a dispute or to win someone over" (NOAD). Mat 5:23-24.

C. If we need the patience of God—and we do—then we had better be patient with other people. Mat 18:23-33.

D. If we are faithfully serving the Lord, some people say damaging things about us. If no one speaks evil of us, we are not faithfully serving the Lord. Luk 6:26. "The slander of some people is as great a recommendation as the praise of others" (Fielding).

E. If people saying damaging things about us because we are faithfully serving the Lord, then instead of being angry we ought to be rejoicing. Luk 6:22-23; Isa 25:8; Heb 11:24-26.

**4. Father focused, faith, and fidelity.** If we are concerned about our reputation, we must ...

A. Be sure it is born out of a desire to serve God as effectively as possible and not out of a desire for personal vindication. 2 Cor 10:8; 11:12.

B. Give our concern to God and trust Him to protect it. 1 Pet 5:7; 2:23; Isa 51:7.

C. Defend ourselves as little as possible and allow our good works to speak for themselves as much as possible. Isa 53:7.

**5. Prayer and study.** Psa 109:2-4; Luk 6:27-28; Psa 119:23-24.