

Bullying

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Phil. 2:3)

There are those within the church who love to be first, causing serious problems just like Diotrephes in 3 John 1:9-11. They bully weaker Christians with their 'superior knowledge' and overbearing attitude resulting in some leaving the congregation while others are told to leave. Diotrephes wanted things his own way, refusing to welcome certain people into the church and maliciously gossiping about others in his efforts to build himself up and keep control. In 3 John 1:11, we are told not to imitate this evil practice because those who do are not of God. Now that is a seriously damning statement.

The greatest command we have is to love one another and lording it over others is far from loving. Bullying is completely foreign to the fruits of the Spirit. Those who bully are either ignoring the witness of the Spirit within themselves (to their peril) or they do not have the Spirit, that is, they are not saved. If someone is not showing the fruits of the Spirit then how can they claim to be saved? Where is lording it over others found in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness or self control? It's not there because it's a fruit of the Devil.

Peter had good reason to put himself above others yet despite the fact that he was an Apostle who performed many miracles, personally walked with Jesus, and was one of the three who witnessed Jesus' transfiguration, he still referred to himself as a *“fellow elder”*. In 1 Pet. 5:1-3 he said, *“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder; a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”* Peter was a mighty, miracle-working Apostle who chose to be a humble servant rather than lord it over the flock.

As we all know, Jesus was the greatest servant and 1 John 2:6 tells us, *“whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did”*. He made Himself nothing to suffer and die as the Servant of all mankind and in Mark 9:35 He said, *“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”* Jesus served God's purpose by denying Himself, even to death, whereas bullies are servants of their own lusts. However, their reward is limited to this life. If they do wash someone's feet, it is only for their personal gain. Rather than bully fellow believers, Christians should *“be devoted to one another in brotherly love [and] honor one another above yourselves (Rom 12:10)”*

We are often bullied by unbelievers but that is part of being a Christian and we are told to bear it. 2 Tim. 3:12 says, *“everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”*. Then 1 Pet. 2:21, 23 tell us, *“... Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps ... When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”* So, when we are pushed around by the world we are to turn the other cheek. 1 Pet. 2:19 tells us, *“it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.”*

If someone is being bullied by a fellow believer then they should follow Matt. 18:15-17 and approach the bully personally to try and fix the issue. If that does not work then take others along and try to resolve it. If that fails then take it to the church and have the bully removed. However, if the bully is the leader of the church then it may not be possible to have him removed in which case the person being bullied may have to move on in order to find peace and good fellowship. Tit. 3:10 says, *“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”* Amen.

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