

ME AND MY INSECURITIES, part 2

Must We Fight?

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Two explorers were on a jungle safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. "Keep calm" the first explorer whispered. "Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run."

"Sure," replied and his companion. "You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?"

A freshman at Eagle Rock Junior High won first prize at the greater Idaho Falls Science Fair, April 26, 1997. In his project he urged people to sign a petition demanding strict control or total elimination of the chemical "dihydrogen monoxide."

And for plenty of good reasons, since it:

- Can cause excessive sweating and vomiting.
- It is a major component in acid rain.
- It can cause severe burns in its gaseous state.
- Accidental inhalation can kill you.
- It decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes.
- It has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients.

He asked 50 people if they supported a ban of the chemical. Forty-three said yes, six were undecided, and only one knew that the chemical was H₂O (water).

The title of his prize winning project was, "How Gullible Are We?" He was attempting to show how conditioned we have become to alarmists practicing "junk science" and spreading fear of everything in our environment. He felt the conclusion was obvious.

Feelings of insecurity may be triggered by many different circumstances, but, overall, insecurity is the result of harboring fear in our hearts.

Psychologists have spent years in studies to identify peoples' fears. I have been told that among them are these:

- Peladophobia: fear of baldness and bald people.
- Aerophobia: fear of drafts.
- Porphyrophobia: fear of the color purple.
- Levophobia: fear of objects on the left side of the body.
- Dextrophobia: fear of objects on the right side of the body.
- Auroraphobia: fear of the northern lights.
- Thalassophobia: fear of being seated.
- Stabisbasiphobia: fear of standing and walking.
- Phobophobia: fear of being afraid!

However, I suggest that the four most common categories of fear are:

- Fear of lack
- Fear of conflict
- Fear of loss
- Fear of punishment

Inevitably, everybody deals with these fears. We develop various ways of dealing with them—usually ineffectively. But God offers real answers to the fears you face. Today, let me illustrate His answer to your fear of conflict.

I don't like conflict. I would prefer to take any other route than the one that is likely to involve conflict. I grew up in a home where my parents expressed conflict by yelling at each other. As a result, yelling gets on my nerves; I prefer quiet. In fact, when yelling starts, I usually get quieter and quieter.

In some relationships, yelling louder and longer is supposed to subdue another person. If that proves insufficient, many have found that adding disrespect and foul language may work.

Some have chosen to seek a path of "no conflict." Others see conflict as a "necessary (or at least unavoidable) evil."

Some see the God of the Old Testament as a God of conflict, decimating whole groups of people in order to establish His will, in contrast to the God of the New Testament, who blesses the peacemakers.

A few, who realize that there is only one God just don't know what to do with these perceived differences and just leave the whole issue alone as much as possible.

Most recognize that, due to our fallen nature, some conflict in this life is inevitable, and struggle to discern which conflicts are just and necessary.

In a world such as ours, the fear of conflict cannot be avoided; it is only a matter of how we choose to deal with it.

Basically, there are only two roads from which to choose: passivity or aggression.

The Passive Trail

Passivity may seem like the "Christian" thing to do. After all, Jesus was generally passive about the ill some people wished to do Him. Peter says of Jesus: ^{1 Peter 2:23} *He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.*

Paul translated that to the daily lives of Jesus-followers:

^{1 Corinthians 4:12} *We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us.* ¹³ *We appeal gently when evil things are said about us.*

Many, however, interpret that as a calling to victimization. And some Christians play the victim to the hilt, with all of its accompanying inaction.

The Aggressive Highway

Other Christians lament the “spinelessness” of fellow believers who shrink before mistreatment. They urge every faithful believer to “stand up for righteousness and truth.” They promote marches and “pray-ins” and an endless avalanche of letters and emails to Congress, chanting, “Let us crush the head of the serpent!”

Every conflict is viewed by these as a direct assault of Satan that must be withstood to the teeth. “Put on the whole armor of God,” they cry.

It’s enough to make a new believer’s head swim!

If you’ve been psychologically inclined to being a victim, then as a believer you’re sure to swing with the doves.

If you’ve been psychologically inclined to fighting for every inch, then as a believer you’ll fit in well with the hawks.

WWJD

But where is Jesus in all of this? What would He have us to do. The answer can only be: both, at the proper times.

If we yank stories out of context, we can make a case for Jesus, the passive servant. Or, we could make an equally “biblical” case for Jesus the aggressive leader.

If you’ve been confused by such talk, you’re in good company. His own twelve disciples were confused about how to label Him.

The reason is: He cannot (will not) be labeled! He responds to every case and circumstance uniquely. He listens to the voice of His Father and does what His Father asks Him to do.

For too many of us, that sounds like too much work! Our lives do not revolve around God as His did. Instead, we bounce from pillar to post, tossed by our confused sense of responsibility and our fears.

Where is God?

One reason we Christians fear conflict is that it suggests that God is not with us or standing up for us; therefore, conflict may indicate that we are outside of the will of God.

2 Corinthians 7:5 When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside.

Paul was “called” to Macedonia in a dream. But his calling did not eliminate conflict; conflict is not a sign that you have missed the will of God.

“Don’t you mean ‘not *necessarily* a sign’?” No. Conflict is *NOT* a sign of missing God’s will. Period. God’s will *often* encounters conflict, simply as part of the program. If you think about it, among human beings born with a sinful nature, conflict with the will of God is simply natural.

Jesus' Wilderness Battle

The Holy Spirit *led* Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Mark's record is stronger: "The Spirit *drove* (compelled) Him into the wilderness." So, that battle was actually orchestrated by God. It was inevitable; it was necessary; it was simply part of the program. Knowing this, Jesus did not panic. Instead, He leaned on the written Word of God for comfort and direction. Always a good response!

Why Can't We All Just Get Along?

Which road will you choose, when conflict looms before you next—passivity or aggression? Either one could be right. Either one could be wrong. To know which to choose, you, too, must ask God for wise direction and lean on His written Word.

The following is attributed to Martin Luther:

*Feelings come and feelings go
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God,
Naught else is worth believing.*

God blesses the peacemaker, but only when peace is His objective. Conquest requires another tactic.

Said William Penn: "Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it."

Relationships always require responsible action. Comfort is not always an option; worry never is.

Worry has been defined as "a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."

Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere.

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes He lets the storm rage and calms His child.

Put your trust in God. Just when you sense the fear of conflict beginning to stifle you, turn to God and announce that you will trust Him for courage to do the right thing and grace to do it in the right way.

A preacher said, "A wise bird knows that a scarecrow is simply an advertisement. It announces that some very juicy and delicious fruit is to be had for the picking. There are scarecrows in all the best gardens...If I am wise, I too shall treat the scarecrow as though it were an invitation. Every giant in the way which makes me feel like a grasshopper is only a scarecrow beckoning me to God's richest blessings." He concluded, "Faith is a bird which loves to perch on scarecrows. All our fears are groundless."

Next time, we'll consider God's answer to the fear of loss.