

The Art of Self-Defense

by

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"You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you." 2 Chronicles 20:17

For all of you football fans and former players, you will understand that offense sells tickets, but defense wins games. Most every successful Division 1 coach will agree with this. Having a good defense wins games. But, having a great defense wins championships. It is the same with business, and you know this if you are a businessman who is reading this devotional. Sure, we like to see the sales and income come in, don't we guys? But if we do not have a way to control our expenses, we lose the game no matter how many points we put on the board and bucks we bring in. So, having a good defensive game for controlling expenses with our business is also necessary. Even our family income and expenses need to be considered as a business enterprise at times, as we try to create and hold to a budget. The fact is, living with our defenses up comes naturally for us men, doesn't it? We are raised to have defenses, and we learn to have them because of some bad experiences we've had. Therefore, I don't think I have to convince any of you to play it tight with protecting your family, your name, and your integrity. But what will you do when you cannot defend yourself and you have no other defense to stand against a force that seeks to tear you down and damage your good name? What do you do in these unique and even despairing times? There is help for you and I want to point you to where you can find the best defense of all during those times. But it takes faith to get under it. So let's talk about something we all want to protect ... our reputation.

I was taught early the value of a good name. (*"A good name is to be more desired than great wealth"* - *Proverbs 22:1*) It was then that I began to see that having certain defenses is a necessary thing, such as protecting my reputation and witness. After all, we represent the King of Kings and carry His name. So, He deserves that we honor Him by the way we live our life. But sometimes it can become too big of a burden to carry, for there are some exceptional times that you just can't stand as a human against some attacks that will come at you and will attack your good name. Things that come to my mind such as slander and gossip are examples of attacks that are inspired by evil and are difficult to defend yourself against. So I will tell you up front that I hate slander and gossip, and I will avoid people who practice that nasty, Godless habit as much as possible. I hate it, especially in those people who profess to be Christians, but use their tongues to tear down rather than build up. Our words are far too valuable to be used in such a destructive manner. I'm sure you could guess that I've had some bad personal experiences with being on the receiving end of slander and I've watched some precious lives that were ruined by it. What I have observed about gossips and slanderers is they don't look at their own life, as they point out the inadequacies in other persons, even though with the misuse of their tongues they bring judgment on themselves. Most often these people think a certain person deserves their criticism, and since their words are couched as something of "concern or prayer," they drop their gossip bomb and then distance themselves from being seen as the source. Then like a torn feather

pillow blowing in the wind, their gossip scatters and can never be retrieved. Look at what the Apostle Paul says about this:

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.” (Rom 1:28-31 ESV)

It is pretty obvious what God thinks of gossip and slander, as He inspired these words to Paul. He includes along with slander and gossip being a *God Hater*, and opposed to those things God values. So here is my warning and my comfort to the reader:

To those who practice slander and gossip, you need to look at the serious issue you are dealing with. You might think your words are innocent enough and you really mean no harm. You think you are simply loose with your tongue, and you think you are not malicious when you gossip about or slander a person. I ask you to re-read the verse above and take very serious what you are doing, for you may not think your words cause harm but you are dead wrong. They are hurting you most of all, and you can see how God views your actions. There will be consequences for your words. Count on it. So I recommend that you stop doing it.

For those of you who are victims of this villainous act that is being waged against you, I say stand firm and seek God's help to defend you. Understand that what is happening to you is evil, and even though those who might be perceived as responsible for the attack being directed at you have clear voices and look like the culprits, the influence they are under is far more evil than they are. You will not be able to stand against this evil that is trying to tear you and your reputation down by your own defenses. It requires a greater power. So read the verse above and find your comfort, for it tells you that God is opposed to this behavior and He will defend you. Now it will take courage to remain silent and not defend yourself. But your silence and dependence on God unleashes mighty forces to come and be with you to defend you. Allow Him to do His work, and you will grow in your faith and with abandonment and trust. Allow God to help you grow in these things by trusting Him now, and you will look back and understand that though there was hurt, there was no harm that came to you, because God protected you.

Back to football and defense. Although I played on both sides of the line during my college football career, I was recruited from high-school as a light, fast, defensive end. There is a special mentality with defensive ends, especially if they are undersized like I was. Watch some games and pay close attention to the position and the successful guys who play it, and you will see what I mean. These guys bring to the game fast reactions, and it is their quick reaction time that is their strength. They have to quickly mentally diagnose a lot of things coming at them, and the rule of thumb is to attack very aggressively anything that comes your way. So that was my instinct as a football player, and it became my instinct in a lot of other things in life, especially when threatened or hurt. *But*, and this is a big “*but*.” I regret many things that I have reacted to, but, I have never regretted anything that I waited on, prayed about, and allowed God to defend me in. It is the same way with words. I have regretted many things that I have said because of a quick reaction. But, I have never regretted something I chose not to say by reacting, but instead chose to wait on the Lord's leadership to show me how to act in a right way. I am learning that my main concern is to be teachable and correctable by the Lord and to be a humble man. This is a test for an old defensive end, and as well a lot of you, even if you didn't play the game.

As I look back over life, I see that my greatest test of faith, and my greatest growth in my faith, has been through the persecution brought by slander and gossip, and my turning to God for His defense, and trusting Him to deliver it. He has never failed me, and He will never fail you if you will allow Him to defend you and walk you through your emotions that often lead you astray. Let Him lead you and you follow Him and it will all work out for you. I'm here to tell you it is so, for He is an artist when it comes to defending His kids who put their hope in Him, and His is the best defense you could ever have.