

When You're Dumped On

Air Dates: May 8-12, 2023

Day One

I received a question from a listener who asked: "What is a loving Christian way of dealing with work issues in which one feels 'dumped on'?" She went on to say that as a nurse, she occasionally works charge duty, a job no one really likes. Because others protest their turn at being charge nurse for the shift, she ends up working far more than she should. She said, "It's high pressure, very tiring and I find myself getting angry at the inequity. How should one address such a grievance—short of simply burning out and quitting?"

Well, she poses a good question: Are Christians supposed to be doormats? This is what Jesus said in Matthew 5:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles'" (Matthew 5:38-41).

It might be easy to read this passage and think that Jesus is teaching us to let people take advantage of us. Is that true? Well, I think the answer has to be "yes." To turn the other cheek, to relinquish your rights, to voluntarily do more than is demanded is, in the world's perspective, to allow others to take advantage of you. And most people have a difficult time swallowing that pill.

But one of the distinguishing marks we bear as Christians in a world consumed with getting what's coming to them and taking care of number one, is a willingness to go the extra mile, even to the point of someone taking advantage of us.

In studying Genesis, I was reminded of how Isaac was taken advantage of. He dug some wells that his father, Abraham, had dug and then his enemy came along and said, "Hey, that's our well. Move on." That happened to him twice, and he could have started a war over the wells; he certainly had a right to those wells and had done all the dirty work to dig them. I imagine the enemy thought he was a pushover because he refused to fight for his wells.

But eventually God gave him the best well in the best location, and blessed him abundantly, much more than his enemies. Isaac was willing to wait on God's timing and purpose, even if it meant being dumped on.

Is someone dumping on you? Ask God to give you patience and endurance to withstand it with gentleness. But maybe not forever.

Day Two

Is someone taking unfair advantage of you? I can't think of anything more frustrating and humiliating, can you? What is an appropriate Christian response when you find yourself being dumped on?

Jesus set out principles in Matthew 5 of allowing people to take advantage of us. Let me give you one example that happened to a friend of mine on her job. She took a new position within her organization, and she encountered a coworker who tried to advance herself at my friend's expense. This coworker began a campaign of lies and treacheries in order to make herself look good while making my friend look bad. This coworker played the political games and worked her way into the confidence of management, convincing them that my friend was not doing her job.

My friend really struggled with this, because she always tried to make her job performance reflect her love for Jesus, and the lies were damaging her reputation. She found it impossible to defend herself because it was her coworker's word against hers. For two years she endured this situation, constantly seeking God's wisdom. And each time she prayed, the Lord gave her the same answer: "Wait." Now, that's not the answer we want to hear when someone is dumping on us, is it?

But during this period, my friend determined to pray for her attacker and let the Lord defend her. After two years this coworker became seriously ill and my friend was left to do the job alone. After four months her boss nominated her as Employee of the Month for the entire very large department. He came to understand what kind of an employee my friend truly was, and she was totally vindicated. No one dumped on her after that.

So, you see, sometimes God is working behind the scenes, and when we desire to obey him and live by the principles of Matthew 5, we open up great avenues of blessing that God can pour on us.

If you're being dumped on right now, before you do anything to correct it or get out of it or get your pound of flesh, will you first do what my friend did and pray to God for guidance. Instead of begging him to change the situation, ask him to work his will in it, both for you and everyone involved. Ask him to teach you what you need to learn through this ordeal. Give him permission to keep you in that predicament as long as it can bring glory to him. And then, let go and wait for his direction. You'll know when it's time to take action.

Day Three

What should a Christian do when being dumped on? We've seen that Jesus sets out principles for us in Matthew 5 that teach us to be willing to be dumped on at times—turn the other cheek, give your coat as well as your shirt, go the extra mile. But does that mean that we are supposed to endure unfair, unjust treatment without end?

Let's look at those principles in Matthew 5 again. It seems to me that while Jesus is teaching us to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile, he is also teaching us that there are limits. He said if someone strikes you, turn your other cheek, but he didn't say lay down on the ground and let him run over you with a truck. He said if you're sued for a tunic, give a cloak as well, but he didn't say to throw in your whole wardrobe. He said if you're asked to go one mile, go two, but he didn't say go fifteen extra miles.

But how do we know the difference? Well, one way is through prayer. Begin by asking God for clear guidance, pray for the people involved, pray for patience and endurance, and pray that God will be glorified through the situation. That will change your perspective and keep you from running ahead of God's plan. Remember, he's working in the background, doing things you'd never dream of, but you can trust him explicitly.

Another way we can determine when enough is enough is to determine if we are actually doing the other person a disservice by allowing him or her to continue to dump on us. There are points at which going too many extra miles would be wrong for others as well as for ourselves—the point at which we become enablers of their evil behavior.

If you're being dumped on right now, ask yourself: Am I allowing this person to get by with behavior that is detrimental not only to me but to others as well? By continuing to be dumped on, am I reinforcing this poor behavior in this other person? And is this situation causing me to become bitter or burned out or resentful so that my testimony is damaged?

Maybe you're in a situation where it's now time to take some action. Certainly we see examples in Scripture, even of our Lord, when godly people took strong stands against unfair and unjust treatment, but not for their sakes alone. I find this to be a clear principle by example in the Bible, that when we take assertive stands simply for our own advantage, we are acting selfishly and usually in anger. However, when we take assertive action to right a wrong, to take a stand against sin or evil, for the sake of righteousness more than to vent our frustration, then we are acting in accordance with biblical principles.

Day Four

Been dumped on lately? While there are times when we are called on to endure unfair treatment patiently and wait for God's timing, there are also times when we know that God would have us take some kind of a stand against this kind of treatment.

If you feel you're in that position, after much prayer and patience, then remember these guidelines:

- Don't take assertive, confrontational action when you're emotional, upset, angry, or tired.
- Don't confront someone else's behavior when others are present. Do it privately.
- Plan your approach. Write it out ahead of time so that you choose your words carefully. Even though you're not going to read your speech, by writing it out you will choose your words much more carefully. Take a few notes with you to help you remember.
- Soften the blow. Choose words that will not cause a defensive reaction on the part of the other person, as much as you possibly can. Try not to issue ultimatums. "Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness," as we read in Proverbs 15, so make your words as palatable as possible.
- Don't talk about the situation to everyone else. Keep this between you and the person you're confronting as much as possible. Be careful not to get in a mode of maligning and degrading that person to others.
- Try to create a "win-win" atmosphere in your conversation. Point out the benefits for everyone involved.
- Be sure your timing is right. Avoid very busy days or times when the other person is upset or tired or preoccupied with other things.
- Most importantly, give this decision much prayer and seek counsel from trusted advisors.

Remember, when we are emotionally involved in a situation, it can be difficult for us to see the forest because we're looking at the trees. We sometimes need the perspective of others who are more objective.

Day Five

Is it a Christian's duty to be "dumped on"? Surely there are times when we must recognize the need to say, "Enough!" Maybe you are in that kind of situation at this time.

If you've extra-miled it, and you've been giving not only your cloak but your whole wardrobe away, it's time to stop and ask yourself how many extra miles you should go. Jesus doesn't call us to be doormats, to simply lay down and allow people to run over us. And if you just let it continue, you'll lose respect for yourself, others will lose respect for you, and eventually you'll explode somewhere to someone inappropriately.

But as you think about your own particular situation, the first question you must honestly answer is "Did I go the first extra mile?" In this society, where we fight tooth and nail for our individual rights, being dumped on is not acceptable in any measure. But Matthew 5 teaches us this principle of doing more than is asked of us, more than others would say is necessary. Whatever form that extra mile takes, we've got to travel the extra mile first, before we take any other action.

For those of you who are extra-milers, I want to thank you and I want to encourage you not to quit. Address the out-of-control situations that exist—yes—but don't crawl back into that shell of "I'll just do what I have to and nothing more."

There's no question that it's possible to go too many extra miles, to become a doormat and allow that treatment to make you bitter and angry. And with that attitude, it's impossible to truly love and care about others and to share the love of Christ with the people in our worlds.

But we must remember that we are called to be servants, and sometimes that requires allowing others to "dump on us." Jesus certainly practiced that principle, and he warned us that in this world we will suffer persecution. But be encouraged, he said, because he has overcome the world.