

PICKING A FIGHT WITH GOD
1 PETER 5:5-7

"PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE!"

The bully picks a fight with a smaller child.
The smaller child picks a fight with a bully???
When we pick a fight with God???

THREE WAYS TO PICK A FIGHT WITH GOD:

All three are related and are manifestations of the same basic attitude.

The church is going through suffering

In the midst of that suffering, they are to entrust their lives to God, the faithful Creator, and keep on doing what is right. 4:19

In the midst of that suffering, the elders are to minister to them. 5:1-4

To shepherd the afflicted flock, caring for the sheep in their time of danger and need.

To teach them by word and example to see their affliction from God's perspective.

In the midst of that suffering, the less mature, and especially the young men, are to submit to the counsel of the mature men of God that He has placed in authority over them. 5:5

The less mature and the young tend to resist that counsel.

They would prefer to fight back.

They refuse to submit to the elders' counsel

They take a proud, independent, "I've got my rights" attitude

They are going to handle matters themselves.

The net result is that they end up fighting God Himself.

Faced with that attitude, Peter exhorts the young to leave their pride behind and to submit to those that God has placed in authority over them.

There are three related bits of counsel that we can point to in these three verses.

To resist these three bits of counsel is like picking a fight with God. In fact, Peter says that God meets those who resist this counsel face to face in battle.

ARE YOU READY TO PICK A FIGHT WITH GOD? Then you had better pay attention to Peter's advice!

THREE WAYS TO PICK A FIGHT WITH GOD:

1. REBEL AGAINST THE AUTHORITY HE HAS ESTABLISHED

We live in a world that tells us to promote ourselves. We have to "look out for #1!" Peter's counsel is the opposite of that. Or, at least a reworking of the idea. It's counsel to look out for the *real* #1!

The less mature, those who act like young men, want to fight back under attack.

**INSTEAD OF PICKING A FIGHT WITH GOD,
IT WOULD BE WISER TO SUBMIT TO THE
INSTRUCTION OF THE ELDERS.**

"In the same way"–

Similar to the elders, who are to show a willingness to serve and be an example for others,

The young men of the church, or perhaps those who do not serve as elders, ought to demonstrate a *humble and submissive attitude*.

The elders could refer to older people, but is more likely drawn from the Jewish context–those who are in responsible positions because of their maturity–normally the older men of the community, though age itself was not the criteria for selection.

In contrast to these mature men, the "young men" are less mature. The word can refer to novices, new or recently arrived people. (Cf. 1 Jn. 2)

The Talmud suggests (Aboth 5:21 (2nd C.):

- At 18, [one is fit for] the bride-chamber
- at 20, for pursuing [a vocation]
- at 30, for authority
- at 40, for discernment
- at 50, for counsel
- at 60, for an elder
- at 70, for gray hairs

Faced with affliction, it is common for the young and less mature to be less patient, and prone to fight back. That's why patience is a fruit of the Spirit and why pugnaciousness eliminates those who seek to be elders.

We are to listen to the elders, be open to their reproofs, watch their lives, imitate their example, and respect their accumulated maturity and wisdom. To do otherwise is an indication of pride and a statement of independence from the authority God has established.

This is not something they have been doing that the apostle wants them to keep on doing continually. He makes a one time command to do something that they apparently have not been doing: **"START SUBMITTING!"**

They ought to submit to the authority which God has established in the church, rather than fight for personal recognition, for rights, or for revenge.

[The second way to pick a fight with God:]

2. BECOME PROUD, INDEPENDENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENT

**INSTEAD OF PICKING A FIGHT WITH GOD,
IT WOULD BE WISER TO BE HUMBLE.**

"Clothe yourselves with humility"

egkomboō– "to bind something to oneself, to gird oneself"

"to put or tie something on oneself (=> any garment that is tied on)" [lit., "to wrap up"
kombos– "band"]

Thayer: slaves used to bind a white scarf or apron over their clothing to identify themselves as slaves and distinguish themselves from freemen. Christians ought to tie humility on themselves in that same way so that everyone will know what their status is in life, as God's people.

Jesus did that. This may be a picture of when Christ took a towel as a servant–this made a strong impression on Peter. Jn. 13. He wore the slave's garment, in order to serve His disciples.

Again, this is not something they have been doing that they are to keep on doing. Peter tells them: **"START CLOTHING YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY!"** "DO IT-ALL OF YOU!"

THREE LEVELS OF HUMILITY:

1. The younger are to submit themselves to the older.
2. All are to be humble in relationships with one another.
3. All are to be humble before God

Cp. our Lord's attitude in Phil. 2:1-11; Jn. 13
We are to imitate it.

The biblical principle which underlies the command:

"God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble" (5:5b; cf. James 4:6; Prov. 3:34 (LXX))

antitassetai—to set oneself against, to oppose
to meet face to face in battle,

The "proud" refers to the arrogant or haughty
The "humble" are those who are brought down,
humbled, submissive,
the small, poor, weak, lowly, humble,
mean or common.

God will give them grace, or favor.

The principle is born out again and again in O.T. as
God's attitude toward the proud and toward the humble
is revealed.

What is not so clearly seen is the attitude James reveals when he indicates that those who don't want to accept God's plan demonstrate. Their idea of having a better plan than God's plan is pride (Jas. 4:5-7).

Concerning Peter's reference to this idea David Peters says:

"Our author . . . has already mentioned that persecution comes to faithful Christians according to God's will (3:17), that it is not foreign to their existence as followers of Christ (4:12-16), and that it is in fact God's purifying fire (4:17-19). If this is so, the duty of the believer is not to resist (either attacking the persecutors or raging against God), but to "humble [himself] under the mighty hand of God.""

God is in control. His hand is holding the universe, our lives, and our suffering. Therefore, we are to humble ourselves before the plan God's hand is working out, rather than fight that plan to have our own way.

What is this pride God warns us about? We can learn its character traits by observing Peter's own experience:

- 1) To think of ourselves and our capabilities as being great, apart from God's strength.
- 2) To think of ourselves as superior to others
Matt. 26:31-35
- 3) To think that our plan is better than God's and seek to follow it Jas. 4:5-7

"God humbles the proud and exalts the humble." (Prov. 29:23; 11:2; 18:12; 22:4; Isa. 2:11; Dan. 4:37; Lk. 1:52; Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6;

Donald G. Barnhouse used to say: "The way to up is down; and the way to down is up!"

If we recognize the superiority of God's plan and submit ourselves humbly to His plan, then, when the appropriate time arrives, He will exalt us.

Therefore,

Command: *"Humble yourselves under (in subjection to) the mighty (strong, resistless = "irresistible") hand of God.*

"START HUMBLING YOURSELVES UNDER THE
MIGHTY HAND OF GOD!"
"DO IT!"

Purpose: "in order that He may lift you up at the right time"
He determines the plan
He knows what is best.
He will exalt the humble when *He* thinks it's best.

It is the same hand that is in control now, while going through the hard times, that He will use to lift them up (to exalt them) when His time comes.

Look at Daniel and his friends' experience in ch. 1-6.
They are down—they stay humble—they submit to Him—they cast their cares on Him—and *every* time, they are lifted up.

The lifting comes when God is ready—not when WE think it's time! It's our place to submit to His plan and to His control. He will do the lifting—*when He's ready!*

Maybe that will be in close proximity—maybe it will be a long term result. The timing is God's decision—NOT MINE!

Remember the hymn—some of us learned the words when we were kids: [We're still learning its practice!]

*This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet!*

That thought leads us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God!

Many of you have memorized and loved Psalm 37:5:
*"Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and
He will do it."*

[Do what? Did you ever memorize verse 6?]
*"He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and
your judgement as the noonday."*

The NIV captures the thought:
*"He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,
the justice of your cause like the noonday sun!"*

You see, when we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, when we stop fighting and give in to His plan and His way of resolving our conflict and our affliction, then He takes charge of lifting us up at just the right time, and it becomes apparent that He has done it and that we are in this for His sake. Our righteousness then shines! Because it's His righteousness.

[The third way to pick a fight with God:]

3. INSIST ON CARRYING YOUR OWN PROBLEMS FOR YOURSELF

INSTEAD OF PICKING A FIGHT WITH GOD, IT WOULD BE WISER TO CAST ALL OUR CONCERNS ON HIS SHOULDERS!

Prerequisite: *Before you will humble yourself under His mighty hand, you will first learn to cast (cast on, throw upon)*

["cast on" – only other N.T. use was when disciples cast their cloaks on the donkey for Christ to ride. You place them on His back. Let Him carry the cares.]

all your cares (merizo – divide => distraction; care, anxious thought) on Him,

recognizing that He cares (to care for, take care of, take an interest in, der. fr. "to be an object of care")

more about you than you care about yourself.

Recognition that His plan is best

Recognition that He cares for you. (Matt. 6:25-34)

We are used to being taught that we must look out for ourselves, because no one else is going to do it for us.

Peter says that the reason we throw ourselves on Him and humble ourselves under His mighty hand is because GOD cares for us.

In fact, He cares more about us than we care about ourselves!

Hodges – "True humility and trust in the Lord go together. On the other hand, pride and worry go together. If we were dependent on God for everything, there would be no place for pride because God gets all the credit, nor for worry because God takes care of all the circumstances."

Peter had been trying to carry the load himself. He learned that God wanted to carry it for him.

The difference in the two approaches is the self-defense route taken at the time of Christ's death, and the bold preaching of the gospel at Pentecost.

**As we experience suffering,
continue to submit ourselves to the authority of those
whom God has placed in positions of authority to
encourage and strengthen us,
humble ourselves toward one another and toward
God,
and cast all our worries on Him,
He takes charge of the program and eventually, in His
timing, produces exaltation.**

**Our perspective on life, when faced with
suffering is not to imitate the world. It is to be
different. To humble ourselves and entrust
ourselves to God, NOT to fight back.**

***What would God have us do about this
instruction?***

We've got a problem with this idea. The world views humility, not as a virtue, but as a weakness. "You can't let people walk all over you!"

God views humility, not as weakness, but as moral strength. Neither Christ nor Moses ever fought for their own rights.

We have hung our view of happiness on the thin wire of comfort and peaceful surroundings.

As long as everything goes our way, we are content. Peter says that our contentment should come from the assurance that our lives are in His hands.

We should submit ourselves under His hand and trust His loving care for us to give us our peace and contentment–NOT our circumstances.

Humble people, who view life from God's perspective, know that God is the One who promotes and exalts us–in his time! We don't have to fight for our rights. He is "the great avenger". Not us!

An unknown poet penned these words:

*God has a tender reason For everything we face,
Just as each change of season Makes earth a sweeter
place;*

*For every night–a morning,
For every thorn–a flower,
His rainbow bright adorning The silver of the shower;*

*Unfailing comes tomorrow To work His will and tell–
God cares through joy and sorrow
God lives, and all is well!*

Which attitude are we going to assume?

That of the apostle and the poet who recognized that God has a plan and we had better submit to it in true humility?

Or that of the world around us that tells us we have to watch out for ourselves, and fight back?