

Shayla: At what point, if at any, do you cease trying to help someone in their faith. Is it ever okay to quit trying to teach or lead someone?

Response:

In a passage that is often quoted but seldom understood, the Master taught:

- Matthew 7:1-6 HCSB *"Do not judge, so that you won't be judged. 2 For with the judgment you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but don't notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, there's a log in your eye? 5 Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. 6 Don't give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them with their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces.*

Notice first that in teaching someone, you are already making several judgments. You are saying within your spirit that they need to be taught – that their knowledge or practice is lacking. You are saying that you have something to teach them – that in some particular respect you are a little further down the Way than they are. You are saying that you are qualified to teach – not only by your knowledge, or character, but by the calling of God. The point that I'm trying to make is that it is impossible to not judge and that is not the intent of the passage. What it is trying to say is that we should not be hypocritical in our judgment and should be willing to live by the same standard we are proclaiming for others.

Second, the Master advocated that we help correct our brother. If we love truly and without hypocrisy, we will encourage the good and discourage the bad in our brother (Romans 12:9). This correction should be done humbly and after first going through a certain amount of introspective meditation and confession of our own sins, but it should happen.

Third, this thought seems to end rather oddly, with the Master saying, "Don't give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them with their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces." Apparently, there comes a time when we realize that by devoting any more time or resources on the person that it is simply a waste. Since our time and resources are not our own (for we are God's stewards after all), to continue any further would be a sin.

This line of thinking was put into practice by the disciples under the direct instruction of the Master while He was still on earth.

- Matthew 10:14-15 HCSB If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town. 15 I assure you: It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.
- Mark 6:11 HCSB If any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, when you leave there, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."
- Luke 9:5 HCSB If they do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

This command would not have been an unusual one for them to hear. The idea that we should not waste our resources upon fools was already thousands of years old and was drilled into the head of every Jewish child in every synagogue.

Did not Hashem give the Pharaoh every chance to do what was right, even though He had already predicted to his servant Moses what would happen? We read that at first Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35) but that after a while, Hashem hardened it for him (Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8). Pharaoh went too far in his stubbornness and the Lord God gave him what he wanted.

Christ, in the metaphorical guise of Wisdom (compare Proverbs 8:22-36 with John 1:1-10) says in the book of Proverbs:

- Proverbs 1:24-33 HCSB Since I called out and you refused, extended my hand and no one paid attention, 25 since you neglected all my counsel and did not accept my correction, 26 I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, 27 when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and stress overcome you. 28 Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will search for me, but won't find me. 29 Because they hated knowledge, didn't choose to fear the LORD, 30 were not interested in my counsel, and rejected all my correction, 31 they will eat the fruit of their way and be gluttoned with their own schemes. 32 For the waywardness of the inexperienced will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. 33 But whoever listens to me will live securely and be free from the fear of danger."

This is a very different view of the ever patient, ever forgiving, Dr. Seuss type of Christ that is commonly presented in many pulpits today, I know, but it is as the Scriptures present Him. Further, Quoheloth (the author or collator of the Proverbs) says that since one of the principle points of life is to learn, and you only have a limited amount of time to do it, why waste it on fools?

- Proverbs 14:7 HCSB Stay away from a foolish man; you will gain no knowledge from his speech.

It takes so much effort to force a fool to do what is right that you have to ask yourself if it's even worth it.

- Proverbs 17:10 HCSB A rebuke cuts into a perceptive person more than a hundred lashes into a fool.

It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool who has no heart for wisdom.

- Proverbs 17:16 HCSB Why does a fool have money in his hand with no intention of buying wisdom?

After all, fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.

- Proverbs 18:2 HCSB A fool does not delight in understanding, but only wants to show off his opinions.

Wisdom is too much for a fool. So don't waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice.

- Proverbs 24:7 HCSB Wisdom is inaccessible to a fool; he does not open his mouth at the gate.
- Proverbs 23:9 HCSB Don't speak to a fool, for he will despise the insight of your words.

There is a seeming contradiction in Quoheloth's teaching in regards to dealing with fools found in Proverbs 26:4-5.

- Proverbs 26:4-5 HCSB Don't answer a fool according to his foolishness, or you'll be like him yourself. 5 Answer a fool according to his foolishness, or he'll become wise in his own eyes.

These two verses seems to contradict each other, but Solomon is making a play upon the little word *ki*, here rendered "according to". In the first verse, it means "in harmony with". To enter into discussion with a fool within the terms of his folly is to lower oneself to his level and to accept his outlook upon life as one worthy of consideration. In the second verse, "according to" means "as it deserves". Answer a fool so that the foolishness of the proposition is revealed to those who listen and to the fool himself. Thus, he may come to realize that he is far from wise and may (hopefully) seek to become so. So answer the fool, but don't allow yourself to descend to his level or to get so entangled with him that he starts rubbing off on you.

Dealing with some people can make you dizzy. Their circular reasoning, or their continual disregard for what they know very well to be true, can only stimulate disgust in the heart of the Ransomed. After a while, we simply gain an understanding of the nature of the act, shrug our shoulders and move on.

- Proverbs 26:11 HCSB As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his foolishness.

Sometimes, it gets to the point that some people simply cannot be fixed; not because we have a limited God but because the person does not want to be fixed.

- Proverbs 27:22 HCSB Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with grain, you will not separate his foolishness from him.

As bad as fools may sound, it's apparently not completely hopeless if they will shut up and humble themselves. Those who continuously spout their own foolishness *ad infinitum ad nauseam* in order to more fully convince the world of their wisdom are beyond reach.

- Proverbs 26:12 HCSB Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Your friend seems to have some regret or remorse left in her heart. We can hope that it will someday bloom into godly sorrow.

- 2 Corinthians 7:10 HCSB For godly grief produces a repentance not to be regretted and leading to salvation, but worldly grief produces death.

Just because you are at the point where you need to quit "casting your pearl before swine" doesn't mean that God has. Just because you were not able to lead the person to the necessary truth doesn't mean that someone else won't be able to. In fact, there are times when I have been in the way. The person couldn't hear the message from me but was able to understand it better from someone else. If I insisted on being the one who "harvested", then I would have been in the way!

- John 4:37 HCSB For in this case the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'
- 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 HCSB I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 Now the one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Humans have limited resources and thus must carefully mete them out in the course of their ephemeral lifetimes. Unlimited, omnipotent, infinite God has far more resources than we can imagine. Carefully consider if the small portion He has given you is being best used for His glory. If it is not, get out of the way.