

How Do You Respond When Someone Challenges You?

Num. 12:1-2

Introduction:

1. How do you respond when someone challenges you?
2. Do you try to avoid the challenge by defending yourself?
 - a. By making excuses—I didn't have time to do what you asked me to.
 - b. By meeting the challenge with a challenge of your own—challenging the challenger—No dinner yet? You said you would take out the garbage but you didn't.
 - c. By blaming the one challenging you—You still are not ready? I would have been ready if you had gotten out of the shower sooner.
 - d. By yes, butting—I know you like hot water for your shower, but I had to wash my hair.
3. All of us have felt challenged and are quite creative in coming up with defensive responses each of which reveals something about our perception of ourselves.
4. "Defensiveness is the camouflage of insecurity." When we feel insecure we cloak that feeling with defensiveness.
5. Moses was not a man lacking in confidence and security. In Num. 12 there is an incident in which he is described as "very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." When he was challenged by his brother and sister there was no need for him to defend himself.

Discussion:

- I. The challenge Miriam and Aaron presented (Note the order Miriam and Aaron. Does this mean that Miriam is leading the charge?)
 - A. Moses had married a Cushite woman.
 1. Not sure what they found so objectionable to this.
 2. Was it a racial issue?
 3. The text does not say.
 4. But it appears that his marrying the Cushite woman put a burr under their saddles.
 - B. Their challenge was, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?"
 1. "He has spoken through us as well."
 2. We are just as good and important as he is.
 3. Why should he take such a prominent position?
 - C. Many of us would have defended ourselves.
 1. Well, God spoke to me on Mount Sinai.
 2. I was the one He gave the Ten Commandments.
 3. God spoke to me from a burning bush.
 - D. But not Moses. Moses' humility inhibited any such defenses. There was no insecurity that had to be camouflaged.
- II. Instead God acted.
 - A. He called the three before the tent of meeting.

- B. God came down in a pillar of cloud and called Aaron and Miriam. Note the order. Can you imagine this experience? How awesome!
- C. Then God said (vs. 6-8).
- D. The cloud departed and Miriam was leprous. Not Aaron. Why not?

III. Aaron appealed to Moses (vs. 11-12).

IV. Moses cried out to the Lord (vs. 13).

- A. He prayed that she be healed. That's humility.
- B. He did not say, "It's good enough for her." He did not say, "I will pray for her--later." He did not say, "Vengeance belongs to God, I can't interfere."
- C. What Moses does is consistent with what Jesus did and taught.
 - 1. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44-45).
 - 2. Turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:38-42).
 - 3. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Pet. 2:21ff).
 - 4. Moses did not defend himself he entrusted himself to God and God handled the situation. His security came from his relationship to God.
 - 5. Faith is about entrusting ourselves to God. It is about being vulnerable, but trusting in God.
 - a. How can Christ willingly go to the cross?
 - b. How can He pray, "Forgive them for they know not what they do."
 - c. Peter calls on us to do right, suffer for it, patiently endure it (2:18-20).
- D. Does this mean that we should stay in an abusive relationship? Does it mean that we should allow oppression? NO!

Conclusion:

- 1. How do you respond when someone challenges you? Do you rise up to defend yourself?
- 2. In humility, Moses did not. It was not because he was unable to defend himself. It was not because he was a milque-toast kind of fellow. He did not mean he was weak.
- 3. His strength came from his relationship with the Lord.



