

Shake the Dust Off!

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Difficult people come in different sizes, shapes, and behaviors. Difficult people are men and women who, no matter what is said or done, always see you as “bad,” “wrong,” or insist on you proving otherwise. As a result, many believers struggle with the idea of turning the other cheek, tolerating words and behaviors that may be seen as becoming abusive.

So much has been written about boundaries, it seems superfluous to say more. However, there are particular times when a relational boundary becomes necessary. Refusing to continue with the present situation requires particular patterns to be present.

Here is what to consider:

- Is the individual consistently resisting sound, fair feedback?
- Do they seem blind to grace even when it is freely offered them?
- Has the person seemingly persisted in selfish thinking or behavior?
- Does the person appear to pridefully trust their intellect vs the truth of what is presented?
- Is there a pattern of treating other people as villains or railing against them?

If these questions are answered with a “yes,” it may be time to “shake off the dust” so to speak, regarding words or behavior harmful to you or to those you love.

The Apostle Paul experienced this very situation when sharing the truth of who Jesus is with the Jews in Corinth. Acts 18:6 states, “But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

In Paul’s situation, the Jews persistently and consistently refused what Paul had to say. The Jews were not interested in knowing the truth to the point of railing against Paul. So, Paul literally shook his raiment and stated the choice is theirs and he no longer holds any responsibility for their salvation.

As harsh as this may seem, Paul’s behavior gives us permission to stop persisting at any pattern of thinking or behavior that keeps us in a position of feeling like we have to prove ourselves, our goodness, or the goodness of God. The decisions people make are their responsibility. Their choices are not our burden to bear. Their future is in their hands.

Our choice to stop or “let go” does not mean we stop loving the person or praying for them. It simply means we quit bearing the burden of their choices and move on to what God has next for us. We can only move forward when we know we have made every effort at honesty with the Lord first about our own choices, claimed ownership of our choices, and made amends if or where needed. Lord bless you as you prayerfully “shake the dust off.”

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