

Coach House Church BEACONS

THE BEST DEFENDER

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If we're going to let God be our Defender, then we've got to come clean on whom the real battle is with when it comes to letting God be God. The real battle in life is with ourselves. Our sense of right and wrong. Our personalities. The baggage we carry from previous experiences. These all have an impact on our ability and willingness to allow God to defend us instead of jumping into the fray with anger in our hearts and sharp words on our tongues; or shoving those hurts under the rug for no one to see. We can't control how people around us are going to treat us. We can't control their reactions, their nagging, or their neglect. The only person in the equation that we get to make behaviour choices for is us.

Sometimes I want to excuse my response to a hurt by minimising my reaction. But anytime I take matters into my own hands without first taking them to God, I'm at risk of breaking these important words: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18 NIV).

Does that mean that I never speak up, never confront? Of course not. What it does mean is that I must first seek God's cleansing of my own heart so that in my anger or my hurt or my confusion or my sense of rejection or violation, I don't respond in sin. Identifying how you commonly respond in hurtful situations will help you frame better responses and healthier perspectives.

So let me tell you this story that happened this week. As I love to do, I go as often as I can to watch Noah the eldest of our twins, play football. He's quite good. Can play defence, upfront, good goal scorer and his awareness of the game is great. Now this week i was blessed to go and see him play against another team from his division. After Noahs team beat the other team, they went on to their second game. The second game is normally played against the other teams b side, so

here we are. Along came the parents too. Now with this team we're three mothers that came to see their children play. One thing lead to another and these three women decided to pass some quite horrible comments on both Noah and another of Noah's team. This totally enraged me. How could someone say such nasty things about my child... I was angry , very angry . I could feel my blood boiling as I prepared to tear these women limb from limb, and then all of a sudden a peace came over me, and I heard a voice say, step away. My response had changed.

One of the main factors that influence our responses are the people we surround ourselves with. We often exact our more petty forms of revenge in some of our closest relationships. Although, sometimes it's the people we don't know who get the full brunt of our biggest reactions to frustrations and hurts. What is happening in these moments? The guardrails that may keep us safe in closer relationships sometimes come down with people we don't know, and we can find ourselves reacting far outside of what is helpful, what is good, what is of God. There were times Jesus stood up—but he also knew when to stand down.

If we're going to let God be our Defender, we have to understand the difference between someone unfairly hurting us and someone who simply has style issues. Whatever wrong, hurt, or injustice I face, that initial experience marks the start of a journey toward a place where I rest fully in having God as my Defender. It's a journey with lots of ups and downs. It's a journey in which I have to face some uncomfortable truths about myself.

We don't always get to have closure, when all the wrongs and hurts get resolved. But when I was honest with myself and saw that the point of this journey I was on was my relationship with God, something shifted. It became my mission to discover his place as my Defender. So be honest with yourself. Is revenge your highest priority? Or is God?.

One of the toughest parts about being someone wired with a deep sense of fairness is that, in fact, there are things that are deeply unfair and they often don't have neat, clean solutions. Unfairness coming from friends and family seems more personal than hurts and wrongs that occur at the hands of strangers,

You're not the only follower of God to face an unfair trial or situation. Jesus was accused of all kinds of things. His reputation was maligned, his motives were misunderstood. The same Jesus who so valiantly and dramatically defended the poor and sick, who refused to allow people to be taken advantage of in the temple

courts, and who didn't shy away from a debate also didn't speak up to defend himself in front of Pilate. Jesus didn't allow ego to become part of the picture. When he defended, it was for the cause of others. When he reprimanded, it was to uphold God's best. But when people made false claims against him, he was silent.

What about you? What are you fighting for? Out of a desire to set you free, I want to ask you to pray an extremely dangerous prayer. Ask God to search your heart and thoughts and show you a righteous way to settle any issue of fairness you are facing today (see Psalm 139:23–24). It may cost you something, but the price may be worth the blessing of knowing you are following God's lead and being freed from the spin you are caught in.

To invite God to be our Defender, there are truths we must accept. Because I have my own sense of what punishment fits what crime, I have a very specific expectation of what God should do to show himself as my Defender in how he deals with those who have wronged me. But God isn't just the upholder of righteousness and justice; he is righteousness itself. And he is the Judge, which means he gets to make the rules.

God hears us when we tell him of the hurts and wrongs we experience. It matters deeply to him. But when God is our Defender, it also means he is the Judge over the case. He's the God who welcomed into paradise the criminal who hung on the cross next to Jesus, a man guilty of his crimes (see Luke 23:32–43). And he's the God who struck down two early followers of the church, Ananias and Sapphira, for lying about how much profit from a land sale they had actually given to the church (see Acts 5:1–11). He gets to decide what punishment fits which crime—and he has his reasons.

To call on God as your Defender is to release your idea of the appropriate penalty and lean into how he is going to deal with it.

God understands our struggle with his timing and he includes our questions of "How long?" in his Word (see Psalm 13). He is big enough to wrestle with us over this question. And he has shown me something amazing along the way: the answer to this question is, "I am here."

God gave me a clear and specific vision that in the midst of some of the most horrible things that have happened to me, he was holding me. Christ covered me

with his robe, even though the situation around me was appalling. In that moment, he was already planning my defence.

If I want to embrace the righteousness and justice of God, I must at the same time embrace his timing for my defence, which might look far different from mine.

I am so thankful for God's grace and mercy—giving us favour that we don't deserve and withholding punishment that we do deserve. When I consider the years I lived in opposition to his call to righteousness, and the ways I still fail, I see that his mercy is all that has stood between me and my own self-destructiveness. As a merciful Defender, God is about the business of saving people—even those we feel are in the wrong. I want to show others the kind of mercy I want to be shown.



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