

INTRODUCTION

People often react in strange ways. George was an elderly member of his church and he lived by simple means. A wealthy uncle of George's died and when the will was probated, the uncle had left \$1 million to George. Since George had experienced some heart problems, some of George's relatives were afraid that if they just broke the news to him that he would have a heart attack. So they asked the pastor to try to gently break the news to George in a way that wouldn't shock him. So the pastor went to visit George. He said, "George, have you ever thought about what you would do if you had a million dollars?" George thought about it for a second, and he said, "Well, I pretty much have everything I need. I guess if I had a million dollars I'd give it all to the church." And the pastor had a heart attack.

This is a message about reactions. Our actions build our reputation, but our reactions reveal our character. We can plan our actions. For instance, I cleaned up and shaved, and wore nice clothes this morning since I knew I would be speaking at church. Those are all good actions. But if you want to know the real me, don't look at me standing here with a Bible in my hand. Instead, watch how I react when someone cuts me off on Loop 323, or when someone gets in my face and starts criticizing me. Actions build our reputation, but reactions reveal our character.

We have come to a turning point in the Gospel of John. In chapters 13-16 Jesus spent the evening delivering a farewell discourse to His disciples. Then in John 17, He prayed His high priestly prayer, and as we learned last week, He was praying for us.

Now in John 18, He arrives in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us that He is under great pressure. He knows He is about to be arrested, put on trial and crucified. But John brings out some important details of that night that we don't find in the other accounts. This is the greatest crisis Jesus will face in His human existence. But we're going to see that even though He faced a crushing crisis, Jesus stayed as cool as the other side of your pillow. And since we are all facing a global and personal crisis, we need to learn from Jesus how we can keep our cool in a crisis.

John 18:1-11. After Jesus had said these things, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas took a company of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing everything that was about to happen to him, went out and said to them, "Who is it that you're seeking?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "I am he," Jesus told them. Judas, who betrayed him, was also standing with them. When Jesus told them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Then he asked them again, "Who is it that you're seeking?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. "I told you I am he," Jesus replied. "So if you're looking for me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the words he had said: "I have not lost one of those you have given me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. (The servant's

name was Malchus.) At that, Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?"

As I mentioned, this is a message about reactions. We can't control the circumstances we find ourselves in; we can only choose to control our reactions. And our reactions reveal our true character. I want to ask you three questions and then compare the way Peter reacted with the way Jesus reacted.

1. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN A FRIEND BETRAYS YOU?

Jesus had chosen Judas to be a part of His inner circle of disciples. Yet, from the beginning He knew Judas would betray Him. In John 6:70 He said, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver; that's about \$200 in today's money. Judas will always be known as the back-stabbing betrayer of a friend.

I recently came across a child's summary of the New Testament. It made me smile, but it had some truth in it. It read: "Jesus is the star of The New Testament. He was born in Bethlehem in a barn. During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Republicans. Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount. Jesus also had twelve opossums. The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him."

Maybe you've been betrayed by someone you thought was a friend. I knew a man in Alabama who was in a business with a friend and that friend betrayed him, and he lost the business. He carried a sense of bitterness about that for many years. Let's notice Peter's reaction and then the reaction of Jesus.

In the heat of the moment, Peter pulled out a sword and sliced off the ear of one of men trying to arrest Jesus. Peter did three things wrong.

(1) Peter attacked the wrong enemy.

There was spiritual warfare going on that night. And we read in Ephesians 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Satan was at work that night. The Bible says Satan had entered into Judas to betray Jesus. I want to say again that the source of all the violence, hatred, death, and disease in our world today is the devil. Jesus said, "the thief comes only to kill, steal, and destroy." (John 10:10)

(2) Peter used the wrong weapon.

It's interesting that he would even have a sword. Under Roman law it was illegal to have a weapon. It would be like being charged today with an unlicensed firearm. Only the Roman soldiers and the Temple Police were allowed to have weapons. The zealots, who were considered terrorists, broke the law and carried concealed swords. There is a better sword God

wants us to wield. In Ephesians 6:17 the Bible says that we should use the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Fast forward exactly fifty days from that night. It was Pentecost and Peter used a different sword—the word of the God. He preached the Gospel and the Bible says in Acts 2:37 that the people were “cut to the heart” and cried out what to do. Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38) And when Peter swung that sword 3,000 people were saved and baptized that very day.

(3) Peter displayed the wrong attitude.

Peter had been sleeping when he should have been praying. When he woke up and saw the mob, he was enraged and struck out in anger at Malchus. While Jesus was keeping His cool, hot-headed Peter was at the boiling point of anger. The Bible is clear about the damage anger can create. In James 1:19-20 we read, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

(4) Jesus displayed divine restraint.

There is an amazing detail in this account that I don’t want you to miss. Jesus said, “Who are you looking for?” They answered “Jesus of Nazareth.” Then Jesus spoke those two powerful words that identified Him as God. He said, “I am.” As we’ve studying John we’ve pointed out how many times Jesus claimed the title “I am” which is the name God used to identify Himself to Moses at the burning bush. But when Jesus said, “I am,” the mob immediately fell hard onto the ground. There was such power in that matchless name that it was as if Jesus tossed a stun grenade onto them.

New Testament scholar Dick Renner agrees. “The members of this militia that came to arrest Jesus were knocked flat by some kind of force! In fact, the verse says they went backward and fell ‘to the ground.’ The words ‘to the ground’ are taken from the Greek word *chamai*, which depicts these soldiers falling abruptly and hitting the ground *hard*. Some force unexpectedly, suddenly, and forcefully knocked these troops and temple police flat!

I think Jesus was just demonstrating to them that they weren’t going to take Him that night. He would willingly surrender to them.

Jesus had said in John 10. “No man takes my life from me. I lay it down willingly.”

Once the mob recovered, Judas kissed Jesus and that’s when the pandemonium occurred. As soldiers moved toward Jesus, Peter pulled out his sword and started swinging away.

Jesus never lost his cool. In fact, in Matthew 26 we read, Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:52-53)

A Roman legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers. So twelve legions of angels would be 72,000. I've written a couple of books on angels and one of the most popular misconceptions of angels are that they are cute, chubby, little harmless creatures. It's like the old song, "Cupid, draw back your bow, and let your arrow go..." No. Angels often appear in the Bible as warriors. So picture 72,000 special forces angels poised on the ramparts of Heaven saying, "Call us Jesus, we're ready to come rescue you." In Isaiah 37 we read where in one night one single angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, so imagine the firepower of 72,000 warrior angels. But Jesus kept His cool. He didn't call on them. He displayed divine restraint, and allowed Himself to be arrested.

2. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN AN ENEMY ATTACKS YOU?

Jesus and His disciples were literally attacked when the mob came to arrest Him. There's a good chance you won't be physically attacked, but there are a lot of verbal attacks happening these days. And people are hiding behind social media platforms to make all kinds of insulting comments. So how do you react? In this event, there were four levels of reactions.

(1) Evil for good

I call that the demonic level. Judas clearly falls into this category. Jesus chose Judas and treated him with kindness and even washed his feet earlier that night. But Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. You've heard the expression "Don't bite the hand that feeds you." Sadly, there are people in this world who harm individuals who had been showing kindness to them.

(2) Evil for evil

This is the revenge level. That's where Peter was that night. He felt attacked, so he attacked back. It's the attitude of an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." I've seen the bumper sticker that says, "I don't get mad. I get even." But in Romans 12:17 the Bible says, "Do not repay evil with evil." It goes on to say that vengeance is God's job, not ours.

(3) Good for good

In this duty level, it's "If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." This is reciprocity. If you are nice to me, I'll be nice to you. But Jesus said that falls short of true love. In the sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "If you only love those who love you, even the pagans do that." There's a higher level of reaction.

(4) Good for evil

This is the Jesus level. Even in the midst of the mob scene of being arrested, Jesus showed kindness. He was simply living out what He had said in Luke 6:27 Jesus said, "But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you."

I want us to pause and take a moment to concentrate on the character named Malchus. Let's put ourselves in his sandals. All four Gospel accounts relate this detail, but John is the only one who gives us his name. He was working for his boss, the high priest. He had been brainwashed to believe that this Jesus was a dangerous man who was destroying their religion and their country. He had to be stopped at any cost. So Malchus was on the front lines as he moved to grab Jesus.

But then out of the corner of his eye he caught the flash of a sword, and he instinctively ducked his head to one side. Peter wasn't trying to cut off his ear, he was trying to cut off his head. Peter was a sailor, not a swordsman.

But Malchus was injured, I imagine he fell to ground screaming in pain. He reached up to the source of the pain and discovered that his ear was gone. His hands came back bloody.

What thoughts must have gone through his mind at that moment? "I'll be deformed for life. I'll probably lose my job. I could even die from blood loss. This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me."

But then Dr. Luke adds an amazing detail. Malchus looks up and sees Jesus moving toward him. There is kindness in His eyes. Then, Jesus, the Great Physician, knelt down and replaced Malchus' severed ear. This was the last miracle before the cross. It was an act of kindness to Malchus, and an act of kindness to Peter. If Jesus hadn't healed Malchus there probably would have been four crosses at Golgotha later that day.

Malchus had entered the Garden to arrest a fake and a fraud. But I believe after Jesus healed Him, he stood back in awe and thought, "This really is the Son of God." We don't know if Malchus later became a follower of Jesus, but I wouldn't be surprised if we meet him in Heaven.

3. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN GOD'S WILL IS UNPLEASANT?

The name Gethsemane means an olive press. To this day, there are still olive trees in that location. Olives are placed under tremendous pressure to extract the precious olive oil. They undergo three pressings, each pressure more intense than the one before. This is a powerful picture of the pressure Jesus felt that night. Three times He cried out to God, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Please take away this cup. But not My will but Yours be done." And three times He came back and found the disciples asleep. In Mark 14, we read that the third time Jesus came back and said, "Get up, my betrayer is approaching."

John picks up the action of the arrest and mentions the cup. In John 18:11 the Bible says, "Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?'" Sometimes we find ourselves facing unpleasant circumstances—and the sword and the cup represent two different ways to respond.

(1) The wrong way: Swing the sword.

Peter thought he could fix the situation, and all he did was make a bloody mess of it. And sometimes we try to do the same thing. We think we can fix everything by our own energy or our own ingenuity. When you are in a crisis sometimes, you think you have to figure out a way to fix the crisis. But sometimes we are powerless to fix it—but we still slash away anyway.

In 1992 when I had been pastor here for a year, a small, but vocal group of people opposed me and attacked me. Their agenda was to run me off as pastor. I was tempted to swing the sword, but I distinctly remember hearing the Lord say to me, "David, put up your sword. I've got this." So that's what I did, and He took care of me.

You may find yourself in a situation where you are fighting away and God's message for you today could be, "Put up your sword." I've got this.

(2) God's way: Drink the cup.

What was in that cup that Jesus found to be so unpleasant? To drink a cup means to go through an experience. Inside that cup Jesus knew there was terrible physical pain. He knew over the next few hours He would be tortured and crucified. He had nerve endings in His skin just as we do, and he recoiled at the thought of all the pain He would face. Also inside that cup was isolation. All His disciples would forsake Him, and He would face the cross alone. Even on the cross, He endured isolation from His Father. He cried out, "My God, my God why have YOU forsaken me?" But I think the most horrifying content of that cup were sins of all the world. He would bear all the sins in His body on the cross. All the lies, murders, rapes, and hatred of the world would stain His sinless soul. That's why He prayed, "Father, please take the cup away. But not my will, but yours be done."

CONCLUSION

We're all in a crushing crisis right now. It's not the first, and it won't be the last. And we should do exactly what Jesus did that night. He did three things and we must do the same three things. First, we've got to pray. This is a time for all of us to cry out to God for help. Second, we must surrender our will to God's. Our prayer must be, "Not my will, but YOURS be done, Oh God." And the third thing Jesus did was to TRUST the Father. He allowed Himself to be arrested and go through the agony of the cross because He trusted His Father. Peter would later write these words about the cross in 1 Peter 2:23, "When he was insulted, he did not insult in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but entrusted himself to the one who judges justly."

As I've said before, during this time of trouble, it's time for us to trust. This isn't a time for fear, it's a time for faith. Zig Ziglar used to say that there are two ways to spell fear. Some people give up and spell fear, "Forget Everything And Run!" That's really what the disciples did that night. And that's probably what a lot of you would really like to do. But we should spell FEAR the way Jesus did Face Everything And Rise.

And Jesus shows us how to keep our cool in a crisis.

God has a cup for you. He wants you to trust Jesus as your Savior. Will you drink the cup? HE wants you to follow Jesus in baptism. Will you drink the cup? God wants you to walk with Him daily and serve Him. Will you drink that cup?

OUTLINE

1. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN A FRIEND BETRAYS YOU?

- (1) Peter attacked the wrong enemy.
- (2) Peter used the wrong weapon.
- (3) Peter displayed the wrong attitude.
- (4) Jesus displayed divine restraint.

"Then Jesus told him, 'Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?'" *Matthew 26:52-53*

2. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN AN ENEMY ATTACKS YOU?

- (1) Evil for good
- (2) Evil for evil
- (3) Good for good
- (4) Good for evil

Jesus said, "But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you." *John 18:11*

3. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN GOD'S WILL IS UNPLEASANT?

"Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?'" *John 18:11*

- (1) The wrong way: Swing the sword.
- (2) God's way: Drink the cup.

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