

He Tore Up the Letter

E. Stanley Jones (1884 – 1973), a Methodist missionary and theologian, was considered the “Billy Graham of India” for his work in that nation. He became friends of leaders of the Indian National Congress party, and spent time with Mohandas Gandhi and the Nehru family.

He once told of a situation in which fellow members of his ashram (a spiritual hermitage or monastery) helped him with a problem regarding his spiritual reputation. It seems that for a number of years, Jones had supported a prominent man financially. And when the time came that Jones could no longer support him, the man turned on Jones and attacked him in the public press.

So Jones sat down and wrote a letter of response in just a few sentences – the kind of reply that doesn’t give your opponent a leg to stand on. As Jones described it, “the kind of reply you are proud of the first five minutes, the second five minutes you’re not so certain, and the third five minutes you know you’re wrong.”

But before he mailed the letter, he sent it to the people of the ashram to get their opinion of it. They sent it back with three words written on the margin: “Not sufficiently redemptive.”



As Jones read these words, he was devastated. He knew that he was winning the argument, but losing the man. He realized immediately that the Christian is not in the business of winning arguments, but of winning people. So he tore up the letter and said, “Lord, you’ll have to take care of my reputation.”

A few weeks later, he received a letter of apology from the man who had turned on him.

It is an important lesson for all of us. When self is unsundered, it tends to be touchy, easily provoked, unable to bear insults.

When self is surrendered to Christ, however, the love of Jesus fills and cleanses self. It is then that we can bear all things, endure all things, and men and women are impacted by our lives.

Love suffers long and is kind ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13: 4, 7-8 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter