



BUSYBODY



Before I get started I would like to make it clear that I am not speaking for any group nor anyone else for that matter but am simply attempting to put forth what I believe the Lord has revealed to me and hopefully continuing to reveal to me. Please do as scripture exhorts and prove (*test*) all things but I implore you that your test be kept strictly with what scripture says and not according to what other men say or have said or what any tradition says. Please see Acts 17:10-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 1 John 4:1. – Tom



Let me start off with asking a question. What do you think of when you hear the term ‘busybody’? I know that in this day and age when pretty much everyone is displaying **EVERYTHING** about their life freely on social media, this is probably an odd question to some. But, think about it for a moment. You are talking to someone whom you know and appreciate and they mention someone that they know because they thought you and that person might get along. This perks your interest so you ask them to describe them to you. As your friend is describing the persons character to you they mention his or her good and not so good qualities. One of the terms your friend uses is the term ‘busybody’. How would you respond? What would you think? Do you deem the term ‘busybody’ as a good quality or a not so good quality?

When I hear that term, the first thing I think of is when somebody is sticking their nose in other peoples business where they do not belong. We all know the person who just has to meddle and be in the middle of everyone’s problems and issues. Most of the time

nothing or very little is ever said to that person because the common thought is “You are not showing grace by saying something.” or “It’s just so-and-so, they’ve always been that way. They’re harmless.” My next thought when I think of the term ‘busybody’ is I think of someone who feels they need to delve into other peoples business or issues because it makes them feel better about theirs. Because of that the first section of verses that come to my mind is when Jesus is speaking during what has been labeled (*by man*) “The Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew chapter 7:

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. (**Matthew 7:1-5**)

Jesus starts this section off with: “Judge not,…” Most people stop there with this section of verses and run with it. “Don’t judge me!” But is that really what He is saying here? If that is truly the case then there are some other issues that need to be dealt with. But, I don’t believe that is what He is saying here. The absolute best commentary on Scripture is other Scripture! Please look with me at a few Scriptures. Let’s start with the first letter of John:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (**I John 4:1**)

The word “try” in this verse also means prove. How can a believer “try” or “prove” the spirits without judging them? A believer is commanded to “try the spirits” which in essence is saying to “judge”.

There is also this verse in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (**5:21**)”

Again, we see that the believer is commanded to “prove all things;…” The word “all” in this verse is all-inclusive which means there are no limits. The believer is to be as the Bereans and look to the Scriptures (*not other men or traditions*) to see if what they heard was true (**Acts 17:10-11**) no matter who said it! And how can anyone “prove” something without judging it?

Next we go to Paul’s letter to the brethren in Ephesus:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God

for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) **Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.** (Ephesians 5:1-11) [*bold emphasis added*]

My main emphasis with this section of Scripture is right after the parenthesis: “Proving...” and then the very last two words “...rather reprove”. The word “them” is italicized so therefore it is technically not there. Paul is stressing to the brethren there (*and to all believers everywhere*) to “judge what is acceptable unto the Lord.” And once that judgment or “proving” has been accomplished then there is “reproving” for that which is not acceptable but is darkness.

Let me end it with Paul’s second letter to his “son in the Lord”, Timothy:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (II Timothy 4:1-2)

Paul is clearly commanding Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” If someone needs reproving or rebuking, was there not a judgment beforehand to come to that conclusion? I hope that you can see the reoccurring theme for the believers to “judge”.

Getting back to our verses in Matthew. With keeping the verses we just read in mind, we can clearly see that it cannot be telling the believers to not judge. Otherwise that would be a contradiction within Scripture and I can adamantly state that there are absolutely **NO** contradictions in Scripture!! But, it is a warning saying that when a believer judges another he will be judged in the same way or fashion. If the judgment is out of spite, then he can in turn expect to be judged out of spite. But, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that before a believer is to judge anyone that they should judge inwardly first to remove the “beam” in their own eye. Once that beam is seen and dealt with then the “mote” in the other person’s eye can clearly be seen. Jesus is declaring a huge contrast here and it is between a “beam” which is a large piece of wood to a “mote” which is a splinter or a

small piece of wool that can fly into the eye. How can a believer see someone's sin when their sin is glaring them in the face? That sin must be dealt with first before even thinking about looking at someone else.

The 1828 Noah Webster's dictionary says this about the term 'busybody': "A meddling person; one who officiously concerns himself with the affairs of others." Synonyms for the term include: "interferer, interloper, intermeddler, intruder, and meddler" according to the modern Merriam-Webster dictionary.

That's all fine and dandy and some might find it interesting but more importantly what saith the Scriptures? The term 'busybody' appears only once in the KJV and the plural form 'busybodies' appears twice. Let's look at those verses and their surrounding verses to better understand the meaning behind the term.

The first time it is mentioned is in the plural form and is in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonian brethren in chapter 3 verse 11. Here is that verse along with the surrounding verses for context. Verse 11 is bold for emphasis.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. **For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.** Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother. **(II Thessalonians 3:6-15)**

The word in Greek for "busybodies" means "to work all around, *i.e.*, bustle about (meddle)." Paul is telling the brethren that they ought to follow his example. Paul was not a slacker. He did not rely on other people paying his way and him just sitting idle reaping in the benefits. He worked hard for a living. He makes it very clear in verse 10 that if the brethren there did not work they should not eat. There was no welfare back then. There was no charity hand-outs. The brethren were expected to work hard. If they were working hard then there would be no time for being a busybody. Thus those that were not working hard were considered "disorderly" or "out of order". Paul makes it

clear twice in this section of verses that a believer is to have **nothing** to do with those that walk disorderly. He says in verse 6 first: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...” And then again in verse 14: “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

Please note the wording here. This is not a request or a suggestion. Paul clearly states “...**we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...**” [*bold emphasis added*]. Is the believer to have nothing to do with the one in disorder out of spite? To get back at the slacker for not doing his part? To shun him for meddling in other peoples business? **Absolutely not!** This command is to be followed first of all because it is a command but secondly it is to be followed for the well-being of the brother who is walking disorderly. It is to bring shame on him so that he might see his error and repent. The believer is not to treat him “as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.”

So, just to reiterate, this action of “ye withdraw yourselves” and “have no company with” is not simply a suggestion. It is not something that is to be winked at and treated lightly. It is not something that can be swept under the carpet. It is to be done in love and for the good of the brother. But it is to be done nonetheless!

The second time it is mentioned in Scripture is in the plural again and this time it is specifically about females. The verse containing the term is bold for emphasis.

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. **And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.** (I Timothy 5:11-13)

This Greek word for ‘busybodies’ is a different word here than in 2 Thessalonians. Here it means: “officious (meddlesome)”. I was not familiar with the word “officious”, so I looked it up. The 1828 Webster’s dictionary says that “officious” means: “Busy; intermeddling in affairs in which one has no concern.” From the verse we get the picture of someone going from house to house speaking gossip, possibly about the last house they were at and before that. Please note that Paul again is not using this term in a positive light. It has a very negative connotation. This is something that a believer is **NOT** to strive for. And even though this section of verses are specifically talking about “young widows” it is not to say that a male can’t fit into the category as well. I have known men who go about being “busybodies, speaking things they ought not.”

The third and last time it is mentioned in the singular. It is in Peter's first letter. Again, the verse containing the term is bold for emphasis.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. **But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.** Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. **(I Peter 4:12-16)**

This section of Scripture is penned by a different man than the two previous sections of Scripture but it is ultimately the same author. It again does not put the term 'busybody' in a positive light. Peter starts it off with: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:..." All believers go through trials and sufferings while here in the flesh. Paul says this in his letter to the brethren in Philippi: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; **(Philippians 1:29)**" The elect **WILL** believe. It is not a possibility but it is "given" to them to believe. But, not only that but the elect are also "given" to suffer. Again it is not a possibility but it is a sure thing and should be expected!

Peter continues, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;..." The believer is to **rejoice** when he undergoes trials and sufferings. This goes completely contrary to our nature and is impossible in our flesh. But, please don't misunderstand, the believer is not to rejoice in the sufferings or trials in and of themselves. The believer is to rejoice in the fact that he has been counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. When a believer suffers for standing up for what is right and true, he is to rejoice and thus "may be glad also with exceeding joy." The believer will be reviled and hated, if nothing else simply because he is a follower of Christ. And the believer is to rejoice and take joy in that fact.

Peter is speaking from experience. In the book of Acts, it is recorded in chapter 5 that he and the other apostles were out preaching the good news and ended up being thrown in jail. The "angel of the Lord" (*Christ*) opened the prison doors by night and let them out. They were then instructed by the angel to run away as far as they could. Right? **NO!** They were then instructed to go back to the temple (*not a private out of the way spot but very public*) and continue to preach the good news. When the Romans realized they were no longer in the prison they found them again and brought them in to sit before the

council. They answered questions giving God the glory without wavering which resulted in them being beaten and were commanded not to speak of Jesus anymore. When they were released, did they go running like scared dogs with their tails between their legs? **NO!!** Scriptures says,

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, **they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.** (Acts 5:41-42)
[bold emphasis added]

Peter then makes a very definite differentiation with his statement “let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.” What does he mean when he says “But let none of you suffer...”? First off we notice the word “but” which is a conjunction and joins the previous thought to the current thought. In this case though it shows the two are contrary one to the other. The sentence before the word “But” says: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy...” Or in other words “If ye *suffer* for the name of Christ,...” then it is a good thing and you should be happy. On the other hand (But), if someone commits these actions, there is consequences because of that action. What Peter is saying here is that a believer’s suffering should **ONLY** come because of following Jesus Christ! A believer’s suffering should **NEVER** come as a consequence of murdering someone. A believer’s suffering should **NEVER** come as a consequence of robbing someone. A believer’s suffering should **NEVER** come as a consequence of doing evil. And a believer’s suffering should **NEVER** come as a consequence of being a busybody (meddler) in other men’s matters. It’s a given that the believer “will” suffer for Christ but that suffering is not to come from doing that which is wrong and evil.

As a side note, I hope that you noticed something in this passage that is very important. Being a ‘busybody’ is in the same category as a murderer, as a thief and as an evildoer. It is not something to look lightly on, turn a blind eye to or sweep under the carpet. If the ‘busybody’ is considered a brother or sister then they need to be rebuked and reprovved. It is to be done in love and with gentle hands so as to not cause hate and discontent but to bring repentance.

Let me end with these two sections of Scripture. They both point to correction or rebuke from the Lord to those whom He loves:

For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth. (**Proverbs 3:12**)

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know

thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:** be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (**Revelation 3:14-22**)” [*bold emphasis added*]

In hope,
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* All scripture references are from the KJV.