

# ADVICE FOR LIVING

BY THE REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING



**Question:** *My husband is one of the pillars of the church. He attends all services and contributes generously to all church activities. But when he comes home, he changes completely. He is a complete tyrant at home. He seems to hate me and the children, too. What can I do? He was once a good man.*

**Answer:** I would suggest that you analyze the whole situation and see if there is anything within your personality that arouses this tyrannical response from your husband. Second, you should sit down and patiently talk over the whole matter with your husband, showing him the unhappiness and disharmony that he is bringing within the whole family. Third, since your husband is a devout churchman, you may consider counseling with your minister on this problem. He could probably say things to both of you that would restore the balance and stability of the home.

**Question:** *Do you think God approves the death penalty for crimes like rape and murder?*

**Answer:** I do not think God approves the death penalty for any crime—rape and murder included. God's concern is to improve individuals and bring them to the point of conversion. Even criminology has repudiated the motive of punishment in favor of the reformation of the criminal. Shall a good God harbor resentment? Since the purpose of jailing a criminal is that of reformation rather than retribution—improving him rather than paying him back for some crime that he has done—it is highly inconsistent to take the life of a criminal. How can he improve if his life is taken? Capital punishment is against the best judgment of modern criminology and, above all, against the highest expression of love in the nature of God.

**Question:** *Is love really the solution to the race problem? Are there not times when a man must stand up and fight fire with fire? I will grant that love, as Jesus lived it, is the ultimate ideal. But it seems to me preachers ought to be honest and tell folks if they live by the turn-the-other-cheek doctrine, the sharp boys out here in this cold world will strip them and boil them in oil. Why don't you preachers admit that love, in the highest sense of the word, is impractical in the world of today?*

**Answer:** I am convinced that love is the most durable power in the world. It is not an expression of impractical idealism; but of practical realism. Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, love is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and religion enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil, and this can only be done through love. Moreover, love is creative and redemptive. Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys. The aftermath of the "fight fire with fire" method which you suggest is bitterness and chaos; the aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and the creation of the beloved community. Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy, but it cannot create and organize anything permanent; only love can do that. Yes love—which means understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill, even for one's enemies—is the solution to the race problem. Often love is crucified and buried in a grave, but in the long run it rises up and redeems even that which crucifies it.

**Question:** *Our social set seems to be typical. The husbands are interested in nothing but Scotch, sports cars and girlie magazines, and the wives do nothing but gossip, drink gin and buy clothes. My husband gets along well with this group, but I don't. It seems to me that there are more important things in life. Am I being snobbish?*

**Answer:** I do not think you are being snobbish; you are simply responding to the highest and best in your being. You are not saying that you are better than these persons intrinsically, but that you are giving your life to better spiritual and creative principles. You are simply living by the principle that every individual is made for that which is high, noble, and good. Man is more than a dog to be satisfied by the bones of sensory pleasure and showy materialism; He is a being of spirit, born for the stars and created for eternity. He who lives his life on the shallow level of the social set that you mention deprives himself of life in its fullness and makes impossible the fulfillment of his creative development.

**Question:** *I was raised in a Christian environment. My father placed great stress on premarital virginity. Of late, I have begun to doubt the validity of his teaching. I am now 29. Over the years, I have lost many boyfriends to other girls who had a more liberal attitude toward sex. I recently met a wonderful fellow, who says no general rule is applicable to all situations. Is he right?*

**Answer:** I think you should hold firm to the principle of premarital virginity. The problems created by premarital sex relationships are far greater than the problems created by premarital virginity. The suspicion, fears, and guilt feelings generated by premarital sex relations are contributing factors to the present breakdown of the family. Real men still respect purity and virginity within women. If a man breaks a relationship with you because you would not allow him to participate in the sexual act, you can be assured that he did not love you from the beginning.

**Question:** *I'm finding it hard to adjust in a white school in the North. The white students are either distant or so gushingly nice that it makes you sick at the stomach. The Negro students, on the other hand, divide into two groups: a minority who aggressively seek white companionship and avoid being identified as Negroes, and the majority who cut themselves off from the whites and associate only with Negroes. Which direction do you think is right?*

**Answer:** This is a problem that usually arises in the transition from segregated to integrated living. You must face this problem by dealing with your fellow students as human beings rather than members of particular racial groups. The whiteness and blackness of the skin should in no way determine the relationship. Properly speaking, a Negro should never have a "white friend"; he should have a friend who happens to be white. A white person should never have a "colored friend"; he should have a friend who happens to be colored. So you should seek to freely associate with white and Negro students, realizing that the relationship is determined by the common humanity of all rather than by race.

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