



# The ultimate insult?

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Have you ever been the recipient of an insult cloaked in humour? These insults very rarely, if ever, come from strangers. On the contrary, they are often spoken by close friends, people you trust. When responding to insulting comments we are often labelled as overly sensitive or lacking in basic humour. Phrases such as “it’s only a joke”, “just a bit of fun” and “where is your sense of humour?” crop up frequently from those who have thrown the insult when challenged.

These days, such insults are thrown around insensitively and without any understanding of the hurt that can be caused to the recipient. I know. I have been there, and I feel sure that many others have been there too, but I am also guilty, as are most people, of doing likewise. It is easy to speak your minds, but it is extremely difficult to withdraw either the words spoken or the wound they have caused.

Skin colour, body shape, gender, sexuality, financial situation, physical and mental impairments and nationality are just a few of the attributes that people target with negative comments. These things are not only personal to the individual on the receiving end but are also often beyond our control. The important issue is that we are all potential targets but also potential attackers.

Indeed, Rousseau reminds us that “insults are the arguments employed by those who are in the wrong,” a quote that is extremely relevant in this instance despite the fact that it dates back to the 1700s. When you also include his further comment “what wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?” we can see how important it is to be sensitive to others, to treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. Kindness today is an underrated word and if we profess to be Christian this should not be so.

Sadly, when we are the recipient of an insult, we are quite unprepared at the time and only come up with a decent response when the moment has passed. Very often the response to the insult can be the real humour in this sort of conversation- there are numerous examples of this- but the opportunity is often missed because of the unexpected nature of the situation. The brilliant thing is that some people are very good with instant humorous comebacks.

It is these comebacks which redress the balance and leave the recipient of the insult on top.

One brilliant example of a great comeback is “I would like to see things from your point of view, but I can’t quite seem to get my head that far up my arse”. Of course, this may be appropriate in some situations, but maybe not in others so it could pay to have a bank of these. Why not try “do you always mask insults with humour” or even “you would think with your multiple personalities you might have one likable one”. You could also try “If I give you a straw, will you go and suck the joy out of someone else’s day?” but my all-time favourite has got to be the one that was said by Sir Winston Churchill, our wartime Prime Minister who,

when accused of being drunk by a colleague, responded immediately with “My dear, you are ugly, but tomorrow I will be sober.” Good on you, Winston!

So, next time you find yourself the victim of an insult cloaked in humour, remember, you are not alone. Remember also, a person’s hurtful comment does not define who you are... it defines who they are.