

## **Anger Begets Anger**

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One of my instructors at Southwest School of Bible Studies once said, "A husband and wife should never yell at each other ... unless there is a fire!" That is funny, in one sense, but it is also true. Harsh arguments and angry words are never constructive for a marriage, or any relationship. Never! Kind words and wisely used speech will always build a stronger relationship. Solomon teaches this principle in Proverbs 15:1-2.

A soft answer turns away wrath...Gentleness will disarm those who are angry. When someone confronts us, our natural defense is to shield ourselves. We will often retaliate with angry speech of our own. It is difficult to remain calm and deal with the situation in a loving manner. Hard arguments and disagreements are always handled best with soft words. Gideon's conduct in Judges 8:1-3 is a good example.

But a harsh word stirs up anger ... A word that causes pain will create resentment. Wrath will produce wrath and anger will beget anger. Using harsh or afflictive words in an argument is equivalent to throwing gas on a fire! Arguments become more escalated when each party continues to use hateful speech. Ephesians 4:26 teaches "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath."

The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly ... Knowing what to say and when to say it requires experience and wisdom. This only comes with time. It's unfortunate when we intend to say something kind but instead, our words end up causing pain because they weren't applied correctly. There are times when even wise counsel can be foolishly given. Choose your words wisely.

But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness ... One of my favorite quotes is, "Better to be thought of as a fool, than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt." God gave us one tongue and two ears. We should take the hint that maybe we should listen twice as much as we talk. Learning to listen takes a lot of practice for some of us. It is human nature, but we should remember Solomon's proverb and do so wisely.

Once a word leaves our lips in anger, or malice, it is forever out there where it may continue to cause hurt. An older, wiser preacher once told me that if you do allow a harsh word to be spoken to a loved one that you later regret saying, then go to that person and "take back" every single word. Verbalize to them your remorse and retract everything you said. Do not just leave the words with them by offering a simple "I'm sorry." Part of having agape love for others means looking out for their best interest. Your lingering hateful words are certainly not something that is in their best interest. Take them back!

James describes the power of our speech in a very poetic manner, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and

sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell' (James 3:6). He goes on to say that "no man can tame the tongue," and that "with it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men," (3:8,9). Perhaps, the most difficult part of being a Christian is watching what we say. If we are to love God with all our being and love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39), then, speaking kindly to others is a clear indication of that love in action.