



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V21 N44 November 10, 2019

TOXIC

“The Venomous Vice of Wrath”

Proverbs 15:1

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Patience

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

“Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.”

Proverbs 14:29



How can anger be soothed?

The word “patient” does not appear in the maxim in Proverbs 15:1, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” It does, however, in the clearly related one in 14:29, “Whoever is *patient* has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly” and the one in 15:18, “A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is *patient* calms a quarrel.” The virtue linking the three maxims is apparently self-control. One person responds to a volatile situation in a *self-controlled* way with conciliatory words, resisting the impulse to respond in a hot-tempered way with hurtful words, while another does the opposite. In the first instance, anger is defused; in the second, it explodes. The hot-tempered person fuels conflict with his hurtful words, while the patient person calms conflicts with his conciliatory words.

Take the *contrasting* biblical examples of Nabal and Abigail for instance. Their story is told in 1 Samuel 25. The main characters are introduced in verses 2-3: “A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife’s name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings – he was a Calebite.” In return for treating Nabal’s shepherds kindly and guarding his property while in the wilderness on the run from Saul, David expected Nabal to respond in kind. But when asked for provisions for David’s men, Nabal replied: “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are

breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?” (vv. 10-11). Given his mean-spirited response, David determined to do away with Nabal and all the men in his household (v. 22).

The wisdom of Abigail stands in stark contrast to the foolishness of her husband. When she hears what Nabal has done, she gathers more than enough provisions for David and his men and goes to meet them. She greets David with these words: “Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name – his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you” (vv. 24-27). Her conciliatory response to David, in the words of Proverbs, “turns away his wrath.” According to the text, “David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, ‘Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request’” (v. 35). In the end, Nabal suffers a heart attack and dies, and Abigail becomes David’s wife.

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Proverbs 15:1

*1 A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

READ in other translations

*1 A gentle answer deflects anger,
but harsh words make tempers flare. (NLT)*

*1 A conciliatory response soothes angry feelings,
but hurtful words make tempers flare.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "gentle" and "harsh."
- Double underline "turns away" and "stirs up."
- Box "but" indicating *contrast*.
- Circle "wrath" and "anger."

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Proverbs 15:1 isn't *exactly* about wrath, one of the seven deadly sins. What is it about?
2. Describe a particular situation to which the proverb would apply.
3. "Gentle" means more than "soft spoken." Explain what it means.
4. Give an example of a "gentle answer" from personal experience.
5. Put what "turns away" means in your own words.
6. "Wrath" and "anger" are *synonyms*. Do you detect any difference in *nuance* between the two?
7. What kind of *parallelism* does the poet employ – *synonymous*, *antithetical*, or *synthetic* – and how can you tell?
8. "Harsh" means more than "sharp." Explain what it means.
9. Give an example of a "harsh word" from personal experience.
10. **Discussion:** Can you confirm the truth of this proverb from personal experience? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

The maxim in Proverbs 15:1 isn't actually about "wrath," one of the seven deadly sins. It's about how to placate wrath. It *contrasts* the kind of response to a highly-charged emotional situation that *diminishes* anger with the kind that *arouses* it. The proverb isn't in the form of a command, and yet, it invites obedience. One commentator writes: "The verse states a fact, but also urges an ideal of conduct. For the purpose of maintaining peace, check the hot retort and give a pacifying reply" (A. Cohen, *Proverbs*, SBOB, 95).

One the one hand, "a gentle answer turns away wrath" according to the proverb. In this instance, "gentle" doesn't mean "soft spoken." It means "conciliatory" rather than "contentious," referring to words intended to promote goodwill and reduce hostility. "Turns away" means the opposite of "stirs up" in line two; unfortunately, there is no comparable antonym like "stirs down," which explains why other translations render it "defuses" (MSG), "deflects" (NLT), "quiets" (GNT), and "will calm" (NCV). Finally, while "wrath" and "anger" are synonyms, the first connotes the *internal* emotion and the second the *external* expression of it. In fact, "anger" is the *figurative* meaning of a Hebrew term that literally pictures flared nostrils, a physical trait characteristic of anger.

But on the other hand, "a harsh word stirs up anger" according to the proverb. In this instance, "harsh" doesn't mean "sharp." It means "wounding" rather than "healing," referring to words intended to inflict pain and injury. The Authorized Version translates the second line: "but grievous words stir up anger," *grievous* being defined as "causing or characterized by severe pain, suffering, or sorrow." "Stirs up" needs little explanation; two of its synonyms are "provokes" and "arouses." Summarizing the point of the contrast introduced by "but," one commentator explains: "Soft speech is like oil on bruised skin to soften and heal it (cf. Judg. 8:1-3); painful speech has the effect of oil poured on fire (cf. 1 K. 12:1-16)" (Waltke, 613).

Customer service representatives practice the truth of this proverb, that is, the first line of it. They get it. Let me explain. From time to time, I have issues with one electronic device or another — usually it's my cell phone or personal computer. More often than not, it's internet access that gives me heartburn. You see, when I have no internet

service, I have no internet *access*, which means I have no Netflix, no Amazon Prime, no FuboTV, and no AT&T TV. After exhausting all efforts to solve the problem, I'm exhausted — and annoyed, too — so by the time I get through to technical support, I'm more than annoyed. I'm angry. And rightly so, as far as I'm concerned; internet service is expensive. But once I identify myself to the AT&T customer service representative and describe my problem, I normally hear words to this effect: "Thank you, Mr. Bulick, for being an AT&T customer; we appreciate your business. I'm sorry to hear that you are having trouble accessing the internet. I apologize and would be glad to help you with that." The representative's conciliatory words defuse the situation, effectively lowering my blood pressure and assuaging my anger.

Consider how different my response would be if the customer representative's words corresponded to line two of the proverb. I call tech support but instead of greeting me kindly, the representative asks me curtly, "Mr. Bulick, what's your problem?" And after hearing my description of it responds, "I don't understand why you are having trouble accessing the internet. Check your cables; you may not be connected." The representative may not recognize that these are "harsh" words, but they are. They imply that *I have a problem* that is likely *of my own making*. What's more, I'm so tech challenged that I don't see its obvious solution. The representative's wounding words would aggravate the situation, effectively raising my blood pressure and kindling my anger. I'm not suggesting that we treat others as if we were customer service representatives — although that might not be a bad idea. I'm simply suggesting that "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Pr 25:11 KJV).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *gentle // harsh* The contrast is between Heb. “a soft answer.” “It is not appeasement at any cost which is recommended, but a studied, conciliatory approach, and v. 1a should be rendered ‘a conciliatory answer’ rather than ‘a soft answer’. It is this which ‘causes heat to subside’, i.e., which restores good temper and reasonable attitudes” (William McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL, 477). “With *answer* it connotes a response that in both substance and style soothes and comforts the listener (Job 32:3; Prov. 25:15)” (Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, NICOT, 613)// and Heb. a “word of harshness.” The term refers to something that causes pain (BDB, 780, s.v. I, *’etsev*). “Words which are wounding and hurtful, and which are deliberately coined and uttered to have this effect, are bound to be inflammatory, and will exacerbate whatever differences already exist. They will ‘raise anger’ (v. 1b) and will set in motion a slanging match; then polemics will be paramount and speech will no longer be an instrument of understanding and conciliation” (McKane, 477). “A painful word refers to a speech act that inflicts psychic pain (see 5:10; 10:22; 14:23)” (Waltke, 613).

v. 1 *turns away // stirs up* The contrast is between “a gentle answer” that “quiets anger” (GNT)// and “a harsh word” that “stirs up anger.”

v. 1 *wrath // anger* “‘Wrath’ in verset A refers to anger’s inner emotional heat and excitement, // ‘anger’ in the B verset, to its outward expression” (Waltke, 613).

Other Texts to Consider

Ephesians 4:25-32

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

For the purpose of maintaining peace, check the hot retort
and give a pacifying reply.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Our family loves the movie *Inside Out*, and we often joke about the little red guy that represents anger. At the drop of a hat, Anger blows his top and his head bursts into flames. Does this sound like one of your kids? Does this sound like you? As parents, one of our jobs is to address the emotional needs of our kids and help them process and navigate these emotions to God’s glory. Anger can be tricky to navigate because, like the red guy, it’s usually a firecracker explosion that surprises and confuses both you and your child. I’m a little bit of a firecracker myself and my husband used to remind me to stay calm and not engage when the kids would act out in anger. So how do we help guide them toward patience and gentleness when flames are flying off their head? It’s important to deal with the emotion behind the outburst before you coach the behavior. Coaching through the emotion of anger can be an opportunity for a deeper intimacy with your child. Listen to your child and reflect back, validating their feelings. Express empathy before offering suggestions. When we jump into the problem and try to fix it, we limit our coaching opportunity, the child’s ability to fix their own problem, and the Holy Spirit’s room to work in their heart. Now it’s time to set limits and move toward alternatives. Parents, we are praying for gentle hearts, loving actions, and homes filled with grace.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Proverbs 15:1 .

1. What does it mean to have a gentle answer?
2. What does it mean to have a harsh word?
3. Put Proverbs 15:1 in your own words.

What Do You Think?

What are some things that make you really angry and how do you respond to those things? How can you respond with gentleness instead?

What Do You Do?

Carry a plastic spoon everywhere you go this week. Ask yourself if you’re “stirring up” anger in others. Make a note of the times you wanted to respond in an angry way but chose gentleness instead. Share how that made a difference in your family, school, activities .

CORE COMPETENCY: Patience

I control my temper when things don’t go my way.

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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