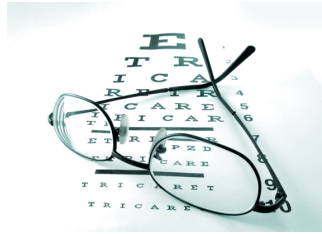


"Selective Vision"

Allan Pole



Theme: Dealing with conflict begins by being honest with yourself.

Text: Proverbs 19:11

Here's a thought: Someone has warned, "If you will always be ready to go off like a loaded gun even by an accident, depend on it you will get into difficulty."

Watch "If We're Honest" video by Francesca Battistelli at www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzkBkCihT8.

Being honest or dishonest with yourself will stimulate or stunt your growth. Knowing that the truth sets people free, Jesus reached out to those who were honest with God, with themselves and with others while religious people often resisted Him, refusing to face their motives and their offenses.

King Solomon observes in Proverbs 19:11: "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense." NIV

The New Living Translation articulates Proverbs 19:11 this way: "People with good sense restrain their anger; they earn esteem by overlooking wrongs."

You've heard of selective hearing. Let's talk about selective vision.

When you are offended, you can:

Look at It

or

Look Beyond It

When you are offended, you can:

Look at It



This proverb speaks to parts of us that are easily offended or oversensitive. Words or actions can pick scabs off unhealed parts of our hearts. It is incredibly helpful to take a look at why you have been offended before you respond. A button might be pushed or a string pulled in you that reveals a hurt from your past that needs to be healed.

Solomon expresses the principle in just a slightly different way in Proverbs 12:16:

A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult. NIV

Have you ever felt like you were walking on eggshells with certain people? To use another word picture, have you ever been talking with someone and felt like you inadvertently stepped on a landmine? In such a case your words or actions brought a surprising – even shocking – response and you are left wondering, “Whoa! What was that all about?” Unfortunately, you can’t always know where the landmines are in someone else’s field but you should pay close attention to the landmines in yours. Noting and removing your landmines is a key to your emotional wholeness and to openness in your relationships.

Have you noticed a common thread in what hurts you or sets you off? Do you pay attention to the thoughts that whirl around in your mind when you are upset? Paying attention to these gauges can be very helpful as you seek to heal and grow.

We can use Proverbs 19:11 to justify the avoidance of conflict. Beware of this danger! Avoiding conflict will lead to emotional baggage accumulating in the closet of your heart. We can tell ourselves and the people around us, “This is no big deal. Followers of Jesus forgive others and do not carry offenses.” It can be unhealthy and unhelpful if we rush past offenses without allowing ourselves to acknowledge and feel the pain. We can do this with grief and suffer many long-term side effects. If we shrug off a hurt that continues to fester inside, our hearts can become infected. Unresolved, suppressed grief and anger is a breeding ground for resentment and depression.

A “paraprosdokian” is a figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation. Here are a couple examples:

The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

I commend to you the book, "Growing Up Holy & Wholly" by Donald Sloat. We Christians have too often unwittingly subscribed to four unwritten rules while we think we are honouring the Lord:

- 1) Don't Talk
- 2) Don't Trust
- 3) Don't Feel
- 4) Don't Want

When we tell our families, friends and church that feelings should not be hurt we end up with the opposite result of what we intended. Even though we want to provide a safe, inviting environment for people we can actually drive them away by asking them to hide their emotions from us. We can even lose touch with ourselves by refusing to acknowledge our feelings.

When someone does or says something hurtful it can be helpful just to say, "Ouch". Offenses are real and Jesus teaches us the steps to deal with them in Matthew 18:15-17:

15 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. NIV

When you work it out explain your offense gently yet directly. Choose to be neither *passive* nor *aggressive* but *assertive*. Avoid the use of "you" as much as possible as this tends to provoke defensiveness. Share your feelings by using "I" statements (i.e. I feel ... or I think). (From "Building a Strong Marriage", Enrich Canada Inc.)

A fool lacks self-control in dealing with anger and irritation. A fool is more interested in getting things off his chest than in relationships. A wise man has the inner strength to wait for an appropriate time and place in which to deal with offenses. A wise man takes a step back to consider what might be prompting the other person to behave in certain ways. A wise man takes a look at how he is processing the annoyance.

Someone has warned, "If you will always be ready to go off like a loaded gun even by an accident, depend on it you will get into difficulty."

Be sure you and the other person are well rested when you sit down to talk

matters through. Exercising self-control by picking a good time and place for such a conversation can go a long way in resolving the matter.

Listen to your internal dialogue when someone says or does something that injures or irritates you. Here are some questions that can help to get the conversation going:

- Can I honestly say I am just being silly or is this offense worthy of a conversation?
- Will this rock in my shoe work its way out or will it continue to make me walk with a limp?
- Is this something I can overlook or will this continue to bother me? If it's the former move on but if it is the latter deal with it.

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At the Crabbiness Research Institute

Solomon says literally in Proverbs 19:11, “The discretion of a man defers his anger; and it is to his glory to pass over a transgression.” To defer is to put it off to a distant time. My mind goes back to the original Passover in Exodus chapter 12 when the Lord passed over the houses of the Israelites who had blood sprinkled on their doorframes. We would do well to remember how the blood of Jesus – our perfect and eternal Passover lamb – has been sprinkled over the doorframes of our hearts to defer God’s righteous anger and judgment for sin. Such a reminder calls us to extend patience and mercy to those who hurt us.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger:

1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments: Discretion teaches us to defer our anger, to defer the admission of it till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it till there be no danger of

running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, "I would beat thee, but that I am angry." Give it time, and it will cool.

2. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to appear as if he did not see it (Psalms 38:13), or, if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it and meditate no revenge. (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

W. Arnot concludes:

On some occasions, we do well to be angry. But the only legitimate anger is a holy emotion directed against an unholy thing. Sin, and not our neighbour, must be its object; zeal for righteousness, and not our own pride, must be its distinguishing character.

Patience is a mark of wisdom, reminding us that wisdom is demonstrated not just by how we appear but by how we treat others. Perhaps you have heard or read 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." NIV

King David was keenly aware of his sin that led to turmoil within his household and eventually rebellion by his own son, Absalom. We look in on David's flight from Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 16:5-14:

5 As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. 6 He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left. 7 As he cursed, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! 8 The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!" 9 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head." 10 But the king said, "What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?'" 11 David then said to Abishai and all his officials, "My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. 12 It may be that the Lord will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today." 13 So David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him, cursing as he went and throwing stones at him and showering him with

dirt. 14 The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination exhausted. And there he refreshed himself. NIV

One of the signs of repentance is a sinner's willingness to face the consequences of sin. While Abishai wanted to lop off Shimei's head in retaliation, David was willing to take his lumps and move on. Such moments endeared David to many of his followers.

I know the Apostle Paul teaches us in Ephesians 4:26 not to let the sun go down on our anger. He uses this word picture to impress upon His readers not to let unnecessary time go by before we deal with offenses. It can be helpful, however, to let necessary time go by before we decide *how* to deal with offenses. There are instances when I know right away that a hurtful comment or action should be addressed immediately. There are other occasions after I have had more time to rest and reflect that I conclude an issue is not worth addressing. In the former case the sting is still there after a few days and the relationship is strained. In the latter case the sting goes away and I can move on because I have no ongoing contact or relationship with the offender or because I realize I was overtired and oversensitive so I overreacted.

I was recently with an older couple that I love dearly and I know love me. The wife remarked to me in the morning, "You've lost weight." About twelve hours later the husband asked me, "Have you gained weight?" I could be greatly encouraged or I could be deeply offended but I have concluded that when we get older we can become preoccupied with people's weight. ☺

Will you start to initiate honest conversations with your soul? Will you choose to be more quick to forgive than to retaliate?

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