

4. Live wisely in an angry world (A Masterclass from James)

Reading: James 1:13-21

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this:
everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,
because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (James 1:19,20)

Proverbs 29:20

Do you see someone who speaks in haste?
There is more hope for a fool than for them.

The circumstances into which James counsels

Clue 1 James 1:2,3,12 'trials...the testing of your faith...trial...the test...'

Clue 2 James 1:9,10 'in humble circumstances...the rich...'

Clue 3 James 1:27 'orphans and widows in their distress'

Clue 4 James 2:1-7
'...exploiting you...dragging you into court...
blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong...'

Clue 5 James 2:15 'a brother or sister...without clothes and daily food'

Clue 6 James 4:13-5:6 'the wages you failed to pay the workers...'

A. An honest diagnosis

James 1:13-15

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ...

¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin;

and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Proverbs 16:14

A king's rage is a messenger of death...

Proverbs 19:12

A king's rage is like the roar of a lion...

Proverbs 17:14

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam...

Proverbs 15:18

A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict..

Proverbs 29:22

An angry person stirs up conflict
and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.

Proverbs 30:32,33

If you play the fool and exalt yourself,
or if you plan evil,
clap your hand over your mouth!
For as churning cream produces butter,
and as twisting the nose produces blood,
so stirring up anger produces strife.

Proverbs 26:21

As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.

Matthew 5:21,22

'You shall not murder' ...
'...anyone who is angry with a brother or sister...'
'anyone who says to a brother or sister, "Raca" ...'

James 4:1-3

'...from your desires...You desire...'
...you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures'

B. An Urgent Search

James 1:5

'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God,
who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.'

James 3:13-18

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

¹⁴But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

'slow to anger' in Proverbs (14:29; 15:18; 19:11; 25:15, NIV 'patient')

Proverbs 16:32

Better a patient person than a warrior,
one with self-control than one who takes a city.

Anger in the church

1 Corinthians 13:5 'not easily angered'

1 Timothy 2:8

I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

Anger in the pastor

Titus 1:7,8

'not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent...
Rather, he must be...self-controlled'

Psalms 141:3

Set a guard over my mouth, LORD;
keep watch over the door of my lips.

C. An Attentive Listening

James 1:19 ‘...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry’

Lucian ‘Don’t lose your temper! Do little talking and much listening!’

James 1:16-18

‘He chose to give us birth through the word of truth...’

James 1:21

‘...humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you’

James 1:22

‘Do not merely listen to the word...’

D. A Careful Speaking

James 1:19,20

'...slow to speak and slow to become angry,
because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires'

James 3:1-12

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. **2** We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. **4** Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. **5** Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. **6** The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, **8** but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. **10** Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. **11** Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? **12** My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Matthew 5:21,22

James 4:2 '...desire...kill...covet...quarrel...fight...'

James 5:9 'Don't grumble'

Restraint in what we say

Proverbs 14:3

'A fool's mouth lashes out with pride,
but the lips of the wise protect them'

Proverbs 12:18

'The words of the reckless pierce like swords
but the tongue of the wise brings healing'

Restraint in how we respond

Proverbs 19:11

A person's wisdom yields patience (slowness-to-anger)
it is to one's glory to overlook an offence

Proverbs 15:1

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

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit,
for anger resides in the lap of fools

Proverbs 12:16

Fools show their annoyance at once,
but the prudent overlook an insult.

Proverbs 29:11

Fools give vent to their rage,
but the wise bring calm in the end.

Proverbs 17:27

The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint,
and whoever has understanding is even-tempered.

The misery of close proximity to angry words

Proverbs 19:13; 27:15; 21:9; 25:24; 21:19

E. A Patient Waiting

James 5:7-11

⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Conclusion to James's Masterclass