

Be Careful About Associations

Proverbs 22:24, 25

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Isn't Solomon wonderful? The wisest of men, his proverbs are filled with tidbits of sage advice, great truths packed into the fewest of words. Notice what he has for us in Proverbs 22:24, 25.

Do not associate with a man given to anger;
Or go with a hot-tempered man,
Lest you learn his ways,
And find a snare for yourself.

Anger is not necessarily wrong. It is a God-given emotion which He gave us for our good, and since we are made in the image of God, it is not surprising to learn that God Himself gets angry. But God is not quick tempered. Exodus 34:6 says that God is slow to anger and James 2:19 tells us, "Let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." Solomon, however, warns against associating with one who is given to anger. Anger controls some people. When provoked they give themselves to its leading as if animals without the power to reason and restrain.

It is not wise to associate with such an undisciplined man. Solomon gives the reason in two parts, the first being, "Lest you learn his ways." Angry behavior can be learned and it can become habitual. You know, when we see a young person given to fits of temper, we should not be surprised to learn that other members of the family have the same problem. A hot-tempered dad begets a hot-tempered son, and an angry mom rears an angry daughter. Anger is not given by one generation to another by the passing of genes, but by training. Uncontrolled anger is above all a learned behavior. A person who spends a lot of time with anyone who allows emotions to run unchecked will probably learn to do the same. Impatience breeds impatience. Anger breeds anger.

But Solomon gives another reason not to associate with a hot-tempered person. He says you will "find a snare for yourself." What is the snare? This could be another way Solomon chose to say what he had just said. In other words, you will be snared into that same kind of uncontrolled behavior. But I can't help but see here the snare of the devil. Not all anger is sin, but the one who allows anger to control him rather than the other way around, will be guilty of sinful anger. The devil will have snared him, captured him and made him his servant because of his unwise association with a man given to anger. Knowing this, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul's hand to write in Ephesians 4:26, 27 (NKJV): "Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."

Here in Solomon's proverb is practical advice from a wise old head of long ago. Those who desire to be in the image of God cannot succeed without following Solomon's advice.