

How to Deal With Meddling

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. –Proverbs 15:1

Jesus asks, “How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?” (Matt. 7:4). He is assuming we are rational, sensible people who would immediately see through the inconsistency of meddling in another’s affairs. The assumption is this: If we have no plank in our own eyes, it would not be unreasonable for us to offer help. But when we have a plank and still meddle, our fault is far worse than theirs. Meddling is always uninvited and almost always unwelcome.

What if someone meddles in your life? How do you respond? Most of us find it hard to respond in a way that pleases God. First, He calls us to maintain a sweet spirit. Never forget: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1).

Second, we are to agree with them. Usually there is a little bit of truth in what a critic will say to us about us. Even if you can’t find a way to agree, you can always say, “I see what you mean.”

Third, we should thank them. This will not only defuse their irritation, but it will also enable them to save face should they be up to no good. In addition, we will avoid making an enemy unnecessarily in the process.

What we must never do when being confronted is to defend ourselves or try to impress them with how good or right we are. We must never seek to punish or get even or make them look bad. Ask them to pray for you! But do it in a noncombative manner, never sarcastically. Confess sincerely, “I need all the help I can get.” The principles of total forgiveness should enable us to make friends, not lose them.

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