

The Wise Warnings You May Be Tempted to Ignore

Wildlife has been especially wild lately. Although June is barely two weeks old, a decapitated rattlesnake bit a Texas man. An alligator killed a Florida woman. And in Minnesota, an unidentified wild animal killed a 5-year-old boy.

Last month, a hungry cougar killed a mountain biker in Washington state. And the month before saw a man in North Carolina killed by a coyote. In March, a crazed river otter jumped into a kayak and attacked a woman.

Some blame the increased animal attacks on the loss of wildlife habitat due to construction. Still others claim the problem is often due to people who intentionally draw close to wild animals despite clear warnings.

Whatever the reason, wild creatures should be given wide berth. Still, cautious behavior is wisely applied to more than just the animal kingdom.

How many times have you and I flirted with disaster when we ignored warnings in other areas of life?

Warnings from parents to children. Advice from doctors. Cautions from law enforcement officers. Yet too many of us ignore wise counsel in favor of desire or convenience.

Which brings us to the counsel and cautions found in the Bible, many of which we *want* to follow ... until something else distracts us. Consider this sampling from Proverbs:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6, NIV).

This verse sound terrific, until we get to the word “submit.”

Submission is a dirty word in our culture, frequently equated with weakness. We say we trust the Lord, but our actions reveal otherwise. Truth is, we trust ourselves more than we trust Him.

In what area are you claiming to trust God, but are not submitting to Him?

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12, MEV).

Appearances can be deceiving, or so the adage says. In the moment, a temptation looks good. It looks right. We justify our choices with phrases such as “What’s the harm?” and “It’s only one time.” But sometimes once is all that’s needed to bring irreparable damage.

How can you cultivate discernment in differentiating between what appears right and what is right?

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1, NIV).

If you’re like me, guarding your tongue is a full-time job. When faced with anger, I want to answer gently. Yet a defensive spirit and harsh words seem to rise up before I can stop them. Of course, I know the result will be increased trouble even as I speak, but my desire to defend myself often overrides my desire to de-escalate the situation.

How can you develop a habit of responding with “a gentle answer”?

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov. 28:13, MEV).

Secrets possess power. What we try to hide ends up controlling us. But when we bring that thing—whatever it is—into the light, it loses its power over us. That *thing* could be shame

over abuse committed against us or guilt over behavior that hurt others. It could also be attitudes of bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness that hurt ourselves. The first step is confessing it to God. Sometimes an added step of confession to another person is needed for accountability.

What are you concealing that should be brought into the light? Will you confess it now to God? If accountability is needed, will you find a trusted accountability partner?

Wise warnings encourage us to avoid contact with wild animals for our own safety. Wise warnings also encourage us to seek a close walk with the Lord and to keep our distance from for our own safety.

What warnings will you heed today? {eo}

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