

Is America About to Explode?

People are screaming at each other a lot these days. The most recent example is a viral video, seen by millions of people since last week, of a woman who went ballistic because a service dog was sitting near her in a Delaware restaurant.

The dog in question belonged to a veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder. But that didn't stop the woman from unleashing a three-minute, profanity-laced tirade. I'm sure all the diners at Kathy's Crab House lost their appetite that evening.

"It is disgusting to have an animal in a public restaurant ... I think it's gross!" the woman screams. (This is a family-friendly publication, so I can't print much more of what she said.)

It seems everybody is furious today. We've created a culture of outrage. People are offended, and if you aren't offended by what offends them, they are offended by your lack of offense.

We are addicts. We crave a daily fix of rage. We rant on Facebook and Twitter because we need a regular dose of vitriol to fuel our habit. Then we turn on a newscast to watch agitated political commentators throw more gasoline on the flames.

The rage burns on both sides of our political divide. White supremacists march with tiki torches to spread hate. Black Lives Matter activists loot stores and smash windows. Former NFL fans burn football jerseys on barbecue grills. Campus lectures require police protection because leftists have threatened right-wing speakers. Madonna drops expletives and threatens to blow up the White House because she's so mad President Trump won the election.

Then last week, President Trump used an unprintable and

demeaning phrase to describe athletes who are protesting police brutality. That was beneath the dignity of a president. I agree we should respect our flag and our national anthem, but you can't demand that respect by using a misogynistic expletive.

Is there anything we don't get angry about these days? Depending on which side of an issue Americans stand, we are offended by Starbucks coffee, Chick-fil-A sandwiches, Target restrooms, CNN, Fox, Nike shoes, the real cause of hurricanes or whatever the actress Jennifer Lawrence said yesterday.

Our rage has become so absurd that this month, a shopper at a Hobby Lobby craft store was offended by cotton stalks (yes, cotton stalks!) in the fall decor aisle. She took her protest online and demanded that the store stop selling dried cotton bouquets for \$ because slaves were used in the 1800s to harvest the plants.

Honestly, it makes me wonder if the real cause of global warming is the alarming increase in human anger. We're going to burn up this planet with our rage if we aren't careful.

My biggest concern is how Christians will position themselves in the midst of this heightened hostility. Will we bring reconciliation? Or will we fuel the flames until both sides explode?

Here are a few pointers that will help us to become agents of peace:

1. **You don't have to comment about everything.** One reason the anger level is so high today is that we have so many platforms to spew our thoughtless words. Want to rant about your noisy neighbors? Go on Facebook Live! Want to boycott a product because you hate the company owner? One tweet could start a movement.

Actually, the best strategy may be to zip your lips. We should

consider the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 5:2: “Do not be quick to speak with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven, and you are on the earth; therefore may your words be few.”

2. **You don't have to take sides in every argument.**

Christians love to be on the “right” side. But I have been thinking recently about the moment when Joshua met the captain of God's angelic hosts on the battlefield. Joshua asked him, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” and the angel replied: “Neither, for I am the commander of the army of the Lord” (see Josh. 5:13-14).

God does not necessarily back either side when people are divided. We want to look at issues through our Republican or Democratic lens, or through our conservative or liberal agendas, but political parties don't control God. His kingdom transcends the kingdoms of this world. If you try to fit God into your human ideology, you have created an idol.

3. **You don't have to be “right” all the time.** Many

Christians pride themselves on being right about certain moral issues. We know what the Bible says. Yet it is possible to be on the right side of an issue and still be very wrong because of your attitude. You can angrily defend your right position, yet you can lose God's blessing because you didn't show love or act with wisdom.

I learned this years ago from Christian author Watchman Nee, who saw God's blessing lift off of Christians in China when they became bitter and divided. Nee wrote: “In God's work He will not bless what is wrong, but He will not bless what is right either. When we stand together in one accord, the blessing comes ... We may be absolutely right in the matter, but the blessing will stop!”

Our country is in a dangerous position in this hour. Fuses are

short, nerves are on edge and fists are clenched. Violence could break out at any moment in this atmosphere of rage. May it never be said that God's people fueled this fire. Ask the Holy Spirit to subdue your anger, and ask Him use you as a peacemaker in these troubled times.