

A WORD WITH YOU - By Ron Hutchcraft
10362 - "Fighting Fire When It's Small"
James 1:19

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He might be America's most famous bear – Smokey! Maybe you can picture Smokey Bear right there in his blue jeans and his Park Ranger hat. They used to have commercials like that all the time. He's probably holding a shovel or he's looking straight at you very soberly. And he's saying, "Only you can prevent forest fires." Actually Smokey has been a pretty effective spokesman, especially if we can think of his big line as soon as we think of him. Oh we'll never know how many fires he's prevented, but he's drilled one very important idea into our heads. Take care of your fire; it could do terrible damage.

I'm Ron Hutchcraft and I want to have **A WORD WITH YOU** today about **"Fighting Fire When It's Small."**

Have you ever noticed the words we use to describe anger? "I'm really hot about this!" "Boy, he's really steamed!" "She just blew her top!" "I was really burned up!" There's this strong smell of smoke here isn't there? And fire - the Bible has a lot to say about the fire of anger and how to control it. Our word for today from the Word of God, James chapter 1 verse 19 for example, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

Well, that's interesting that it doesn't bring about anything good, right? A rough translation or paraphrase might be, "You don't do anything right when you're angry." In fact, isn't it when you're angry that you tend to make your biggest mistakes? Oftentimes you'll also leave the deepest scars. You create some of the biggest regrets, and it's when we're angry that we most often hurt the people we love the most.

That's why the Bible says in Colossians 3:8, "You must rid yourselves of all such things as anger and rage." This isn't just passively saying, "Well, I can't help it. I lose my temper." It's saying, "Attack this thing! Get rid of it. Take it out like the garbage." James chapter 1 gives us some hints as to how. We could call these fire fighters for that anger fire inside of you.

First of all, it recommends a big ear. That's the first fire fighter. It says, "Be quick to listen, and then you'll be slow to become angry." If you discipline yourself to listen before you speak, to ask two or three questions before you react you'll be a lot more likely to tame your anger. Bite your tongue until you've heard the whole thing. A lot of "blow ups" come from misunderstanding; that's where we get most of our exercise - jumping to conclusions. Have a big ear. If you're quick to listen you'll be slower to become angry.

I think the second fire fighter is the "cool down time out". That's what I call it. It says, "Be slow to speak." Take a step away before you respond; leave the room if you have to. Step away from the person. Step away from the situation. Take the cool down time out, and come back in and act instead of reacting.

And thirdly, here's another fire fighter. I call it the "sundown clock". The Bible talks about it in Ephesians 4:26. "Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry." See, anger never stays the same size. It always grows bigger. It will never be smaller than it is right now. So, get rid of it before you go to bed tonight. Deal with it. Get it out. Don't stuff it inside. When you don't act that way, well, Ephesians 4:27 kicks in, "Do not give the Devil a foothold." Unresolved anger, when you go to bed at night, leaves Satan a wide open spot in your heart.

You and I have caused enough emotional forest fires in our lives haven't we? And too many people have gotten burned. It's time we draw actively on the love and the power of Jesus Christ to declare war on that fire inside; to keep that fire small, to extinguish it quickly before we allow it to do any more damage.

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