



Knee-Jerk Reactions

In the medical field a knee-jerk reflex is a sudden kicking movement of the lower leg in response to a sharp tap just below the kneecap. We also use this knee-jerk expression to describe someone's response or reaction to a question or situation, often in a very predictable way or without thinking. A knee-jerk reaction is typically a quick reaction that does not allow you time to consider something carefully.

While I could share an overflowing bucket full of illustrations and stories from my own life that would make you either laugh out loud or shift uncomfortably in your seat, I thought it would be more valuable to share some thoughts about what should be at the epicenter of our reactions.

I was recently reading Paul's words to the church in Colossae. In chapter three he gives instruction to his brothers and sisters in Christ to have their hearts and minds set on things above, not on earthly things. He calls them (and us) to rid ourselves of things like anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language. Each of these destructive "things" Paul describes can be a dangerously attached "spur" riding on the side of our reactive comments or actions. Be it un-intentional or otherwise, these "spurs" of destruction (a tool of the evil one) can have a powerful impact on relationships we have with others.

Paul offers us some strong counsel on how we as followers of Christ can work in our lives to help smooth the sharp points down on the spurs that can cause harm. He says:

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." (Col. 3:12-14)

In Christ we have the power to overcome the fractured image of a once perfect reflection of our heavenly Father who created us. When the peace of Christ rules in our hearts and the perfect unity of love, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience come together they are the means that help to condition (for better) our sometimes-hasty reactions.

Knee jerk reactions are inevitable in life, they surface in our daily face-to-face interactions, through social media posts and other areas of life. We would do well to heed to Paul's words in verse 17 of Colossians 3: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Today, it is my prayer for all of you that strive to live according to our Fathers will, that you will show a natural response of love and compassion in all your words and deeds with those around you.