

Two Sides to Every Story

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Proverbs 18:13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Proverbs 13:3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

A certain old legend tells of two knights meeting on a highway, and getting in a dispute over a shield that was suspended between them. One said that it was silver, the other declared it was gold. From high words they passed to blows with sword and battleaxe, until finally they both lay bleeding, exhausted and mortally wounded in the dust. A traveler coming along, saw them in this plight, and asked the cause. They with failing breath explained the trouble, when their questioner informed them that they were both right and both wrong; that the shield was silver on one side and gold on the other.

The obvious lesson from the story is that before battling the two warriors should have gone over, each to his opponent's side, and discovered for himself what of fact and truth was in the statement of his antagonist. If this had been done, not only anger and bloodshed would have been prevented, but life itself saved.

The folly and contest of the two knights is still to be seen, and the bitter battle is on hand everywhere because men persistently look at but one side of a statement, report, question or occurrence. On all sides we see contestants weltering in something more precious than life blood; who have not only destroyed peace, happiness, reputation and influence in others; but fought themselves out of their own spiritual peace and blessedness; and murdered not only the faith, love and joy of others, but killed their own as well. They stabbed, and were stabbed to death in the saddest sense of the word, and in the identical way that the two knights perished.

- I. Most people think their first impression is always the correct one.
 - A. The first word they hear is taken as the absolute truth.
 - B. If they hear a rumor they take it as the pure, unpolluted truth.
 - C. If they suspect something they count it as a revelation.
 - D. If it is written in a book or a paper it is unquestionably the truth.
 - E. This all transpires without them making any attempt to see the issue from the other's point of view.
 - F. Most people seem to be inclined to believe evil of others rather than good.
- II. Have you ever heard something of someone and been prejudiced against them?
 - A. Then have you later found out that you were misled, or not told the whole story, or outright lied to?
 - B. If we were swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, we would avoid these kinds of traps.

- C. We can make all kinds of blunders in our lives by not taking heed to these instructions from God.
 - 1. We hurt those we love.
 - 2. We lose friends and hurt others.
 - 3. We miss out on friendships and blessings from people we cull because of something we have heard about them.

III. Age and maturity should temper this tendency to take everything at face value.

- A. We learn with experience and other things to withhold judgement until we can hear “the other side.”
 - 1. One of the best teachers is when we are the object of someone’s quick and unjust judgement upon the words of one witness, who naturally puts a twist on their words to put themselves in the best light.
- B. We actively seek out another point of view other than the first one presented to us.
- C. We become aware that there is ALWAYS more than one side to any issue.
- D. We learn to stop swallowing down everything that is dished up to us without first checking it out to make sure it is true.
- E. We live in a time when there is a lot more misinformation being put out there than any other time in history.
- F. So we all need to check things before we pass them on to anyone else.
- G. We also need to refrain from passing things on just so we can be the one who gets to tell it.
- H. Unless it will be of some benefit it would be better to let it die and talk about something of real value and importance.

“Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak.” “The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds.”

A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards. (Proverbs 29:11)