



REFLECTING
HUMAN
WORTH

IN HOW WE
LISTEN

AND
TALK

RESPECT THE IMAGE

TIMOTHY M. SHOREY

FOREWORD BY MARTY MACHOWSKI

There are Christian resources on communication in human relationships that tell the reader lots of stories but fail to connect these practical anecdotes, challenges, and instructions to biblical truths that transform the heart. On the other hand, there are resources that tell the reader eternal truths about conducting relationships as God intended but that leave the reader with little in the way of procedural knowledge—with no practical answers to “How do I do that?” *Respect the Image* helps us all precisely because Tim aims to make every truth transformative and every story connect to the truth.

—**Jeffrey S. Black**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Counseling and Psychology, Cairn University; Director of Counseling Services, Oasis Counseling Center, Cairn University

In *Respect the Image*, Tim Shorey reminds us of the importance of being engaged listeners who seek authenticity and love genuinely as a pathway to peace with our neighbors. With biblical insight and personal transparency, Tim provides effective, practical steps to pursuing peace with those with whom we might disagree. Requiring truth-telling and vulnerability, while recognizing the full humanity of others, and embracing both our uniqueness as well as our unity in Jesus Christ as an image of the gospel, *Respect the Image* is a focused and helpful plea for greater listening and learning in all our relationships.

—**Ruth Naomi Floyd**, Vocalist; Director of Jazz Studies, Cairn University; Lecturer on African-American Spirituals and Resident Artist, Temple University

The introduction to this book is exceptional and will serve people on many levels, and the entire work is deeply theological and gospel saturated. Its applications are clear and well connected to the truths that it presents. And the writing is winsome. Although the author presses into areas that can be challenging for people, he

does so with a pastoral tone and without any harshness. I would recommend this book and use it for my leadership small group (as well as any other group). It will serve the church well.

—**Kyle Huber**, Lead Pastor, Greentree Church, Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey

Expertly crafted, this rich biblical treatment of relational and racial unity is a blessing and an encouragement. Tim challenges us to see and respect the image of God in everyone—those who are like us and those who are not like us. This is a high and holy calling that, if every believer heeds it, will glorify the one true God and bring change to our homes, communities, churches, and nation. Here is a practical book to read often and practice always.

—**Diane Hunt**, Counselor; Editor and Coauthor, *Crossing the Jordan: Living Victoriously in Difficult Relationships*; Conference Speaker

As I read this powerful and riveting book, I found myself confronted by sound theological truth that was laid out in plain, easy-to-understand language. I got no further than the first chapter before I was confronted by the bold truth Tim had penned. His winsome style of writing drew me in, making it easier for me to receive Spirit-filled correction and admonition on how I speak to others—beginning at home! This should be a sermon series for churches across our nation!

—**Anthony W. Hurst Sr.**, Part-time Professor, School of Divinity, Cairn University

In *Respect the Image*, Tim Shorey provides the glasses we need in order to see people as God does and to love and honor them for who God made them to be—image bearers of the King. Shorey offers young and old, single and married, and people of all backgrounds a compelling biblical pattern for living life in relationship

with one another. Get this book, read it, and live it out—you won't be disappointed.

—**Marty Machowski**, Pastor; Author, *The Ology: Ancient Truths Ever New* and *Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God*

Respect the Image is a winsome, creative, and biblically faithful book that was a pure joy to read. Shorey does an excellent job of compelling the reader to grow spiritually in the important area of communication and to realize the spiritual significance of doing so. The book addresses how communication impacts racial, social, and political tensions as well as giving us practical ways to move forward with hard conversations. *Respect the Image* is one of the best books I've read this year, and I have already commended it to my church family.

—**Mike Seaver**, Lead Pastor, Risen Hope Church, Summerville, South Carolina; Founder, *1Charleston*

**RESPECT
THE IMAGE**

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REFLECTING
HUMAN WORTH
IN HOW WE LISTEN
AND TALK

TIMOTHY M. SHOREY

R&R
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To my multicolored and multicultural
Risen Hope Church family.

In complexity, adversity.

In adversity, humility.

In humility, charity.

In charity, unity.

In unity, fidelity.

In fidelity, beauty.

In beauty, doxology.

CONTENTS

Foreword by Marty Machowski 9

Preface: Choosing Our Vowel Carefully 13

Acknowledgments 19

Introduction: God, the Image, and the Gospel 21

1. Chill 31
2. Open Up 47
3. Make Time 63
4. Mean What You Say 79
5. Understand What You Hear 95
6. Nourish with Grace 111
7. Initiate Peace 129
8. Celebrate Others 145
9. Assume You Are Wrong 163
10. Think the Best 179
11. Examine Your Heart 195

Conclusion: Grace to Do What We Are Told 211

Appendix A: GRACE and Race Fellowship:
Proximity in Action 215

Appendix B: A Word about Profanity 221

Appendix C: Communication Couplets 225

FOREWORD

Imagine a man working in a dark mine. All day long he tosses aside worthless rubble. But if he discovers the glint of a carbon crystal among the other stones, his whole outlook will change instantly . . . assuming, of course, that he is aware that a diamond is in his grasp. Without this knowledge, he will see only rocks.

Too often we fail to see that the people around us are diamonds in the rough. We need help with recognizing the priceless treasure of every person. Not only will having this understanding keep us from tossing others aside like so much rubble, but, as Tim Shorey argues, it will also change the way we communicate with them on a daily basis.

Tim has written this book to reintroduce us to the image bearers whom we walk and talk with every day. And he helps us to ensure that the words we speak are worthy of the royalty we are addressing. God created each of us in his image to reflect his glory—even those who reject their inheritance as sons or daughters of the King. Tim helps us to see that words are a precious commodity with which we can either build up or tear down. When we use them to build up, we reflect the image of God in us. When we use them to tear down, we cast a shadow over that image.

When we lose sight of the special ways in which we each reflect our Creator, the love that should be a part of our communication is often next to go. *Respect the Image* provides a recipe

for restoring communication that honors God by honoring the image of God in man. When put into practice, the instruction in these pages has the power to transform our relationships. Tim offers the reader “a complete life makeover” and introduces “a whole new way to live” (see p. 18).

You may think that those are bold claims, but I’ve seen Tim embody this in his own life. I’ve watched him love those who have tossed aside the value of a godly relationship with him in order to become his enemies. I’ve seen him give of himself in order to serve an ethnically diverse congregation and adjust his communication in order to better care for folks who have differing cultural backgrounds. Tim is looking forward to heaven, where people of every tribe and tongue will stand shoulder to shoulder in shared praise and unified communication. He believes that our diversity reflects God’s image more fully than any homogenized view of humanity does.

Tim lifts our understanding of people to a higher level. Even though “we are immortals traveling through life with immortals [and] eternal splendors conversing with eternal splendors” (p. 27), when our gaze is weighed down by our sinful nature, we miss the incredible worth of the lowest of men. If we should see them for who they are—bearers of the heavenly seal and reflectors of the majestic creator—then we would surely speak to them with honor. Even if they are a nagging neighbor, an incredulous boss, or, even worse, an enemy, we can communicate with people with grace, peace, humility, and love.

Let me invite you to join Tim on this journey. He would say that he has plenty to learn—more ground to cover. But he’s further down the path than I am—and perhaps than you are, as well. Read this book and welcome it like the voice of a traveling companion who is shouting, “I’ve found the path!” amid a thick, dark forest in which you have both been lost.

While *Respect the Image* is a treasure of truth and wisdom, Tim’s writing is full of practical suggestions and illustrations that

are designed to help you to grow in effective, godly communication. Apply the lessons he has provided, and the folks you are close to will notice. Tim is a pastor, and that shines through these pages—while he wants you to learn, he even more so wants you to grow. I have grown watching Tim practice the truth he’s written about in these pages—and am the better for it. I’m glad that, through the pages of this book, you get to share the friend and pastor I have come to know and love.

Marty Machowski
Pastor and Author

PREFACE

CHOOSING OUR VOWEL CAREFULLY

What happens when two people meet over coffee or come face-to-face in conversation or in conflict? Here is a still more pressing question: what *should* happen? Are there *oughts* and *ought nots* that should govern how we listen and talk? The answer that we choose hinges on what we think it means to be human. In fact, how we define humanness will decide the quality of every relationship in our lives.

In simple terms that everybody can understand, our options appear to be three. Humans may be *chimps*—no more than accidental evolutionary cousins to tree-swinging primates. If so, we can and will relate to others as we'd relate to the orangutan on a safari or the back-alley rodent that is scouring through refuse for dinner. Humans may be *chumps*—no more than thickheaded, messed-up, seriously damaged moral and relational misfits. If so, we can and will relate to others as we relate to things that are broken beyond repair: by throwing them all away until we find one that works to our liking for a while. Finally, humans may be *champs*—created beings who are made to bear God's image, transcend moral mediocrity, rule the earth, and inhabit eternity. If so, we can and *must* relate to others as we would relate to cosmic royalty—with nothing but respect.

Although only a single letter separates each of these options, they represent vastly different views of life and of what it means to be *us*. Everything good in human relationships depends on whether we choose the right vowel. As this book will argue, we are not chimps; though there is no denying that, due to cosmic rebellion and sin, we are spiritual and moral chumps. But, at the same time, we are much more than chumps. We are made to be champs—immortal sin-conquering and world-ruling victors.

Despite all our human failings, there is a word-defying quality about humanness that should be seen and known and felt. Each person exudes a beauty that is tinged with glory. Every human on the planet is a being that is worthy of wonder—an immortal who is poised on the cusp of eternity. As crusted with sinful grime as we might be, we are all divine icons and earthly images of the heavenly; we all have stories to tell and glories to share.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

I have written this book to show how profound respect matters when we encounter one another on the countless battlefields of life. It is the fruit of thirty-seven years of pastoring that have included around fifteen thousand hours of counseling and thousands more hours of studying the Scriptures, reading about relationships, dialoguing across cultural and racial lines, and simply being with people. My experience tells me that what God says about human relationships and communication is for people of all ages and stages. More specifically, it's for

- anyone who isn't a hermit;
- spouses who want to bond and become one;
- parents who want to navigate the minefield of their teens' adolescence without losing life or limb in the process;
- siblings who have turned their home into a Civil War Gettysburg;

- pastors who want to lead humbly, as well as congregations who want to follow in kind;
- pastoral teams who want to serve together with effectiveness and trust;
- bosses and workers who don't want the workplace to be a war zone;
- the white, the black, the brown, and the officer in blue who deeply misunderstand and cynically distrust one another;
- the liberal and the conservative who care deeply about the same things but find it hard to believe that they do;
- people who are trying to share community life—whether in the hood, in a rural town, or elsewhere—without tearing one another's eyes out.

This book will not address all the issues and conflicts that people may face. But it will address *how* to address them—and that, I believe, is what is needed most.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Let me set expectations. *Respect the Image* is part theology—a study of God. It is part anthropology—a study of humans. And it is part methodology—a study of principle and practice. It is a truth and life blend: doctrinal and practical theology in the same mix. Three great foundational truths undergird the practical teaching of this book:

1. *God talks and listens.* God reveals himself in love and holiness and hears us in all our weakness, longing, need, and love. This truth dignifies and sanctifies communication. To communicate is to be godlike; to communicate *well* is to be godly.
2. *Humans are made in the image and likeness of God.* As the “offspring” of God's being, we are immortals conversing

- with fellow immortals. Consequently, we should reflect the image that we bear and respect the image that we share.
3. *In all our communication efforts, we need gospel assurance.* Our comfort is grounded in the atoning death and perfect righteousness of Christ, which are both counted as ours through faith in him alone. Without this blessed assurance, guilt, regret, and insecurity will crush our spirits, stymie our communication, and leave our relationships in the shallows—if not in the grave.

The first of these truths inspires our worship and trust. The second honors those who bear the image and elevates our discourse. The third answers our guilt and produces confidence for the way ahead.

PECULIARITIES, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND CAVEATS

Built on these theological foundations, this book includes eleven principles acrostically arranged. The word *COMMUNICATE* will guide us through these principles as we encounter them in the book, with a bit of simple poetry and alliteration added in to help to secure truths in place. These devices have a long history as well as a biblical precedent, and I use them to help to hook truths into minds and hearts.¹ My acrostic is longer than most, simply because relationships require a comprehensive life change that is guided by many different precepts and truths. But it can still aid your memory and produce a GPS when your relationships leave you lost and confused. When that happens, the eleven biblical principles it contains, if empowered by the Spirit

1. Not everyone prefers alliteration. Yet even so esteemed a theologian as J. I. Packer explains his use of alliteration as “a preacher’s ploy for pointedness. Pardonable? Perhaps.” J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God* (1984; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 40.

and committed to memory—and, even more, to life—can make a mighty big difference.

Reader release: if you cannot (or choose not to) remember my memory device, forget about it. No harm will be done; no offence taken. And as for the poetry? It is a simple attempt to secure things in place a little more snugly. If it doesn't work for you, it too may be freely ignored.

I should add as well that all the stories throughout this book are true unless I indicate otherwise. I have changed names and added circumstantial details to protect identities without embellishing the facts. Quotations are either reproduced verbatim or accurately summarized. Likewise, the actions that are described are honest representations of what I have seen, heard, or read.

Finally, I have included quotations whenever I think them helpful. Quoting people is problematic, however, in that I'm quoting *people*. More than a few have been guilty of, or party to, some bad theology or politics or morality, to go along with whatever good they may have said or done. If I quote someone on one point, it doesn't mean I agree with him or her on every point. I almost certainly do not.

A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LIFE

This book is about life change.

Years ago, I counseled a couple who were on the brink of divorce. Theirs was an angry, loveless marriage, taped together by the couple of kids they shared. Children often keep rickety families together and afloat for a while; but in this case, the mess that Dad and Mom brought into my office was a perfect storm that was about to blow it all to oblivion. Their problem was an utter breakdown of communication. They had no idea they had each married an image bearer—an offspring of God. And, having no respect for the image, they had no clue how to converse with the immortal human being with whom they were living.

I took a few sessions to lead them to God, to the gospel, and to the COMMUNICATE principles in this book, drawing from the Word, from life, and from my own personal messed-up experiences. I have never forgotten the wife's pensive pause when I finished my counsel to them. Clearly she was crafting a careful response, which finally came: "Tim, what you are asking us to do is a complete life makeover. This is a totally different lifestyle than we've lived to this point. I mean it. It's a whole new way to live."

She was right. Godlike love isn't half-in. It goes after it all—whole and hard. If we really want profound respect and joyful love to mark our relationships, then we'll have to buy into something more than three easy steps. We'll need a complete heart makeover—a whole new way to live.

You will discover a love- and hope-producing message in the pages that follow. I pray that it will provide the help that you need to live life in a whole new way—to listen, to learn, to lament, to laugh, to love, and to linger, all in relationship with the people with whom your life intersects. These are the graces that make our human-to-human connections truer and deeper—the very things that make us like the God in whose image we are made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are more than due to all those who have helped this book become a reality.

Thanks to Nancy Difabio, who first encouraged me, when I was still a very young pastor, to take this material into the world—to public high school seniors.

Thanks to Rush Witt, Amanda Martin, Dave Almack, and the whole P&R team, who caught a vision for *Respect the Image* and were willing to look beyond the risks posed by an unknown author.

Thanks to all those who helped to preview my manuscript and sent along all kinds of helpful suggestions: Ron Woudenberg, Nykki Effunuga, Kyle Huber, Mike Seaver, Marty Machowski, Ethan Shorey, Rob Saathoff, Ruth Naomi Floyd, Diane Hunt, Anthony Hurst, Vincent Callaway, and Jeff Black.

Thanks to Risen Hope Church—the church family with whom I get to do life and love; the friends and family in faith who have hung close and tight, despite the challenges of the journey.

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Thanks to all my children, by blood and marriage, whom I love more than life and who have filled my life with joy.

Thanks to all the grandkids, who have promised never to forget that I love them.

Acknowledgments

And thanks to Gayline—my dearest treasure on earth—who has loved me and cheered me on, even from pretty ancient times. There is simply no one on earth I would rather listen to and talk with than you. Thanks for living this book with me.

INTRODUCTION

GOD, THE IMAGE, AND THE GOSPEL

“And God said . . .” (Gen. 1:3)

*“You have . . . crowned [us]
with glory and honor.” (Psalm 8:5)*

Since it's God's image we reflect,
Let us converse with deep respect.

Readers tend to be in a hurry, especially if they are in the middle of a mess. I get it. If I have broken plumbing and the house is flooded, I'm not interested in opening a homeowner's manual to a ten-page introduction called “The Philosophy of Pipes and Drains.” If water is where water shouldn't be, and if stuff is coming up that should be going down, I want to know how to turn off the water, clear the pipes, and get it fixed.

You may have picked up this book in order to find a quick fix. But while you will find much practical help throughout its chapters, you should know that no true and lasting fix can happen unless we start with what we believe and work from there. To be blunt, the reason why our relationships are broken and our

communication pipes are making stuff come up that should go down is because the theological pipes through which our communication flows are both misaligned and backed up all the way to the street. Fast-acting drain cleaner won't help this.

Communication is a theological exercise before it is a relational one. When you and I interact, we apply our up-to-this-very-second core beliefs. Thus, *bad* communication is a result of poor or unapplied theology, which leads to fractured families, racial tensions, class warfare, church splits, neighborhood war zones, and international crises. And *good* communication is a conscious application of what we know about God, what we know about humans, and what we know about the gospel—all of which leads to respect, healing, peace, and love.

Before we gather tools to improve our communication techniques, we need to understand three key communication-related truths. In the process of doing so, we will discover that truth transforms. The fix begins before we even pick up a tool.

TRUTH ONE: GOD SPEAKS

Calvin can help us with the theology part of this. Not to disappoint my Reformed friends, but I'm referring to a certain six-year-old Calvin of comic strip fame rather than to the sixteenth-century Calvin of Protestant Reformation fame. Those in the know will realize that while sixteenth-century Calvin planted theological TULIPs with care, six-year-old Calvin was more likely to uproot his mom's tulips in mischievous fun. However, Calvin the Younger sometimes speaks for humanity when he philosophizes. For example, when conversing about the Christmas mystery of Santa Claus with Hobbes, his stuffed tiger, six-year-old Calvin expresses skepticism about God.

Calvin: "This whole Santa Claus thing just doesn't make sense. Why all the secrecy? Why all the mystery? If the guy exists, why

doesn't he ever show himself and prove it? And if he *doesn't* exist, what's the meaning of all this?"

Hobbes: "I dunno. . . . Isn't this a religious holiday?"

Calvin: "Yeah, but actually, I've got the same questions about God."¹

That's some very bad Calvinism there. Young Calvin thinks that God has cloaked himself in secrecy—which is ironic, given that in the strip, he complains about a silent God while frolicking outside in a world that proclaims God's glory (see Ps. 19:1). The Creator shows himself every day through all the galactic and microscopic wonders he has made—ensuring that his existence and character can be seen clearly by all (see Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19–20). In addition, he has planted a "you-know-that-I-exist" seed inside all of us—writing his truth upon, and shining his light into, every heart (see John 1:1–9; Rom. 2:15).

Still more ironic is that Christmas, the context for young Calvin's philosophizing, is all about God's showing himself in the flesh. As true as it is that God has spoken for a long time through nature and Scripture, in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son (see Heb. 1:1–3). Jesus of Nazareth is God in a body—God's breathtaking, perfect, eternal divine image revealed. He is God's *here-I-am* and *who-I-am*, delivered to the human race.

God has shown himself and spoken to us so clearly that no one has any excuse for not knowing him. The problem with young Calvin (the same problem that is shared by most humans) is that he is so busy listening to his own voice—and causing general mayhem—that he cannot hear *the* Voice. He is humanity in denial. Even though God shouts his holy love through nature, Scripture, and the manger, humans have pushed the mute button.

1. Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, December 21, 1987.

Later we will further explore how God speaks, when he speaks, to whom he speaks, and what he speaks—but for now it is enough to notice *that* he speaks. When it comes to communication, God started it. As Francis Schaffer says, “He is there, and he is not silent.”² In nature, in Scripture, in Jesus, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we hear the voice of God. In fact, not only does God speak, but he never stops talking.

If we open our mouths to speak, we reflect the self-revealing nature of God. If we open our ears to hear, we reflect his love. This is theology—truth about God—that makes a real-life difference when we are sipping coffee with a friend, negotiating business with a client, facing rebellion in a teen, or seeking peace across a color, culture, or class divide.

TRUTH TWO: HUMANS HAVE VALUE

Some Christmas ornaments—like those shiny ball ornaments that are boxed in twelves at the dollar store—are added to the tree simply in order to fill space and reflect lights. If they break, nobody sheds a tear. But other ornaments can be neither priced nor replaced. My most valued ornament is a little bird cut from yellow construction paper, which is hung on the tree with a piece of red yarn. Gayline, my bride of more than forty years, made it when she was eight—and it has been around ever since. I assure you that I give this ornament special care because of the one who made it. I do not touch it, handle it, or put it away except with gentle affection and tender respect. It gets treated extra well because it has extra value.

As it is with ornaments, so it is with humans. How *much* we value people determines how *well* we treat them. One key to just and merciful communication is to know others’ true

2. See Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 30th anniv. ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2001).

value—which makes a biblical understanding of what it means to be human pretty important indeed.

The Christian gospel begins with the glorious news that *before* we became sinners in Adam, we were created as living icons of God.³ We were made in God's image, as God's representative rulers and vice-regents on earth, to reflect his sovereign rule and holy love in this world (see Gen. 1:27–28). Yes, humans are now sinners who desperately need forgiveness. We need to be redeemed, regenerated, reclaimed, and restored if we are ever going to become all that we were meant to be. But depravity and dignity can coexist. Salvation doesn't bestow human glory; it restores it. God is redeeming believing sinners to enjoy the fully manifested glory in and for which all of us were made in the first place. He made us a little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor (see Ps. 8:5), and through Jesus he is leading us into a glory that will surpass that of the angels (see Heb. 2:5–10).

This image—however defaced and disfigured by sin it may be now—is still there, even in the “worst” of us. *After* the Genesis 3 fall into sin, God says that every human is sacred still, because he or she is made in his image (see Gen. 9:6). Paul calls even the idolatrous Athenian pagans the *offspring of God*—a wondrous phrase that sets them (and all the rest of us) apart from all other creatures (see Acts 17:28–29). James says that when we curse another human we are cursing one who is made in the likeness of God (see James 3:9). Even in our vilest state, each of us still bears the image.

3. Thanks in part to the misguided science of recent times, this is a glory that has been lost and a dignity that is little felt by our neighbors, friends, and foes. This bequeaths to us a world without a creator God—and, if a world without a creator God, then a world without those who are created *in his image*. No God to know and love, and no image of God in which to discover true value. This is not only a denial of the truth but also a lousy deal.

The biblical doctrine of human value restores the glory of all of us—and also positions believers in particular to infuse a merciful, just, respectful, and loving quality into all our relationships before (and with) a watching world. Because we know that we are all made in the image, we know that there are no superiors or inferiors in the human family. No lessers or greater. No lowers or higher. Just equals.

C. S. Lewis understood the implications of this, and he expressed them powerfully in these well-known words:

The dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. . . . It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. . . . It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.⁴

No doubt if you were to see me right now, you would question the *everlasting splendor* part of Lewis's words. At this very moment, my 6-foot, 4-inch, 240-pound hulk is slouched in my easy chair in post-dinner sloth—full, fat, frumpy, fallible, and fallen. And I mean *slouched*. To paraphrase Wodehouse, it looks like someone poured me into this chair and the chair forgot to say "When."⁵ See me now and you would laugh at the incongruity between my present position and my future final condition. But

4. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (1949; repr., New York: Harper One, 2001), 45–46.

5. P. G. Wodehouse, *Very Good, Jeeves!* (1930; repr., New York: The Overlook Press, 2005), 33.

the Day is coming—and it is coming for all who believe—when the chair will be traded in for a throne. And on that Day I will slouch no more.

We are immortals traveling through life with immortals, eternal splendors conversing with eternal splendors, godlike beings interacting with godlike beings. This has major implications that inform what we are, what we're like, and how we're supposed to communicate. If we are godlike beings, then we should communicate like God does—and a commitment to doing so will dramatically and permanently alter our relationships with one another.

Since it's God's image we reflect,
Let us converse with deep respect.

TRUTH THREE: THE GOSPEL MATTERS

There is a glory in and about every human being—but you wouldn't be able to tell by the way we talk, and perhaps even less by how we listen. Too often our words sound like we're conversing with worms and weasels instead of wonders. Let's face it: we're wretched at this. James 3:9 stands like a condemning judge over our lives, and so does Matthew 12. Having told us, in verse 34 of that chapter, that our words are often careless because our *hearts* often couldn't care less, Jesus proceeds to say,

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (vv. 36–37)

His warning sets off a tremor in the soul. After all, who can count the careless words he or she has spoken?

Isaiah felt something more than a tremor in the temple one day. While worshipping, he saw the Lord seated on a throne. As

the seraphs provided the soundtrack “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts,” the holy glory of God filled the temple with smoke and the temple foundations shook. This temple quake produced aftershocks in Isaiah’s soul, filling him with holy, humbled terror. He felt doom coming upon him as the blazing fire of God’s holiness burned into his sinful heart. But as the piercing light penetrated Isaiah’s darkness, perhaps to his surprise and to ours, what it revealed was not his immoral deeds or sinful actions or impure thoughts or unloving behavior, but his dirty mouth. “Woe is me!” he wailed. “For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips” (see Isa. 6:1–5).

When confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah felt communication guilt and shame. He thought about all the bad things he had ever *said* more than about all the bad things he had ever done. The prophet whose calling was to speak the holy words of God felt doomed by all his own unholy words.

Thankfully, there’s more to the Isaiah story. God cleansed Isaiah’s lips with the touch of a coal from the sacrificial altar (Isa. 6:6–7). He assured Isaiah that forgiveness through sacrifice is real—yes, even for all the petty, nasty, and dirty things he had ever said. You and I need that gospel assurance as well—given how petty, nasty, and dirty our own mouths have been. We need to know that our sinful words have been atoned for through Jesus’s guilt-removing, justice-satisfying, and wrath-appeasing death on the cross. We need a coal of divine mercy from the altar of Calvary to be placed upon our lips.

And we need Jesus’s righteousness—his perfect words as well as his perfect deeds—to cover us before the throne of heaven. The obedient words and deeds of Jesus are a whiter-than-snow robe that covers our many sins, making us accepted and approved in the sight of God. This is, in part, what it means to be *in* or *in union with* Christ. Ephesians 1 and 2 teach us that in Christ we are chosen, redeemed, forgiven, adopted, lavishly graced, and, yes, destined for an eternal inheritance—despite the fact that we were

born dead in sin (see Eph. 1:3–14; 2:1–3). This is true of every person who has ever turned in true faith to Christ. We are not just saved by Christ's atoning death; we are saved by his perfect words—which means that we can approach our speech problems from a place of gospel security before God.

STAYING TETHERED

Knowing that God speaks affects how we think about communication. Knowing that humans are made in the image affects how we think about those with whom we communicate. Knowing that we are washed in the blood and that we wear the robe affects how we think about all the communication messes we have made. As we stay tethered to these truths, let us now move on to biblical principle and practice.

Let's start fixing some pipes.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Consider the fact that God speaks, as well as the ways this chapter suggests that he does so. In what ways does he speak, and how do you take regular time to listen to him?
2. How do you know that God values you and others? What truths from the Bible confirm that he does?
3. "Since it's God's image we reflect, let us converse with deep respect" provides a starting point for communication. How does the truth that even your worst enemy is made in the image affect your thoughts about him or her?
4. Ephesians 1–3 present much of what it means to be "in Christ." From those chapters, create a list of all the spiritual blessings that the believer has through union with Jesus.
5. How can your union with Christ affect your relationships with others?

CHILL

OPEN UP

MAKE TIME

MEAN WHAT YOU SAY

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HEAR

NOURISH WITH GRACE

INITIATE PEACE

CELEBRATE OTHERS

ASSUME YOU ARE WRONG

THINK THE BEST

EXAMINE YOUR HEART

1

CHILL

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

“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.” (Prov. 17:27)

To keep from war while in a spat,
Turn down your anger thermostat.

I had to learn early that it is not a good idea to rage and scream at immortals. Forty-five years ago, I was a mid-teen who was going places. People pegged me for a leader type. I was athletic enough to be a three-year, two-letter varsity sports jock, did the honor roll thing, attended church youth group, managed to have a friend or two, and even had a couple of girls who liked me (it helped that they wore very thick glasses). So you can imagine my surprise when a high school buddy named Bill told me that no one in my church youth group liked being around me—adding, with more than a little scorn, “Tim, you are so angry so often that everyone wants to stay away.” Apparently there was something about my critical spirit and yelling tone that people didn’t like. Go figure.

There was a history behind this. Check my bio and you'll see that I had a problem. Maybe I was so angry because I didn't feel like an immortal myself. After all, the young teen version of me had a zit problem that could have served in a pizza ad—or at least I assume so, since “Pizza Face” was the moniker that school bullies attached to me.

No doubt being the third of four highly competitive brothers didn't help, either. We were four apples that hadn't fallen far from a very competitive tree. None of us liked losing—but I was the worst. Defeat unleashed explosive words and destructive acts. My high school tennis coach could testify to this, since he had to replace several rackets that I smashed in my rage.

My brothers could confirm this, too—both the one over whose head I obliterated a ping-pong paddle and the one whose backside I smote with a two-by-four. For the record, I did *not* know there was a nail in that board. Only when he yelled as if Robin Hood had shot him did I realize that my assault had produced sharp-force as well as blunt-force trauma.

Despite all this, I was clueless about my problem until Bill's truth arrow pierced me through. In that moment, I knew that something was terribly wrong. Lifestyle choices and communication techniques had made me toxic, and I needed to change.

I tossed in bed that night with Bill's rebuke haunting my heart. “This is not how I want to do my life and relate to people,” I thought. “This has to change. Yes, Lord, please help me to change. I must learn self-control.” Right there, right then, empowered by grace, I made that choice. And change happened.

I tell this story because plenty of you can relate—and because I want you to have hope. Change can happen. I am sixty now and am awed by the power that Bill's words, through their anointing by the Spirit, released in me. His wounding words were my cure. I am amazed by it. God used Bill's rebuke to alter the course of anger in my life. In the forty-five years since, I've rarely yelled at anyone or had any kind of volatile outburst. Not that I've *never*

expressed anger wrongly or hurt others in sinfully creative ways. I have—and way too many times. But I’ve been mostly cured of the sin of explosiveness, of temper tantrums, of angry outbursts and eruptions. And I’m pretty sure that all the image-bearers in my life are the happier for it.

Simply put—thanks to Bill, I learned to chill.

THE NEED TO CHILL

Given what we learned in the introduction to this book,¹ it is best not to holler and scream at future eternal splendors. Humans are worthy of better. Besides, because they are usually not fully aware of their own image-of-God status, they are likely to holler back.

The Proverbs of King Solomon tell us that we need to chill. With relentless repetition, Solomon insists that we rein in our emotions and calm down before we speak. How do you turn away someone’s wrath? Give them a soft answer (see Prov. 15:1). How do you quiet contention? Don’t be hot tempered, and do be slow to anger (see Prov. 15:18). How do you stop a quarrel-flood from pouring out? Have a cool spirit, and quit the argument before it even starts (see Prov. 17:14, 27). Do you want to keep anger from igniting? Remove the kindling of a quarrelsome spirit (see Prov. 26:21). What happens when you give full vent to your spirit? You only prove yourself a fool (see Prov. 29:11). And what if you choose to be full of wrath and given to anger? All that you will get out of it is a lot of strife and sin (see Prov. 29:22).

These ancient sayings contrast the effects of a quiet response with those of a noisy one. A failure to chill fuels the flames of conflict, while a decision to chill douses the fire. In a conflict, anger tends to be parasitic; it finds a host organism—usually the other

1. I recommend that if you did not read this book’s introduction, you go back and do so. It is a helpful foundation for all that follows.

person's anger—and sucks its virulent life from it. Anger begets anger, and intense heat causes intense quarrels. Somebody has to chill, or it's going to get ugly.

If coolness of spirit ends strife, then at times a good stiff conversation with self is in order. We must secure a tight, two-fisted grab on our own collars and, with a full eyeball-to-eyeball gaze into our own inner being, say, "Self. Get a grip. Chill. Calm down. Compose thyself." We need to speak with authority and then listen up. If we don't, what might have started as merely a little tiff will likely turn into war.

To keep from war while in a spat,
Turn down your anger thermostat.

FROM PROVERBS TO IMPERATIVES

For Paul, this is serious truth. Ancient proverb becomes binding imperative in Ephesians 4:31: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." With full apostolic authority, Paul forbids several hotheaded sins in one rapid-fire sequence.

- *Bitterness* is very angry hurt or offense that poisons a relationship. It is when my offense over your actions or words sours my thoughts about you and poisons my ability to love you with a sincere and affectionate heart.
- *Wrath* is passionate anger that produces attitudes, words, and actions that are generated and fueled by emotions.
- *Anger* is wrath in action—acted-out wrath.
- *Clamor* refers to angry outbursts. It is high-decibel anger: voice-raising, door-slamming, table-pounding, wall-punching fury.²

2. Paul makes it clear that while it may not always be wrong to be angry (see

- *Slander* is unnecessary negative speech about another person. It's anytime I speak of somebody's real or imagined badness, unless it is absolutely needed for the good of someone involved.
- *Malice* is evil intention or ill will. It is when the heart goes dark. The light of kindness, goodness, and grace is snuffed out, and the only thing that remains is the will to hurt, harass, and harm people who are made in the image of God.

All of these are hotheaded sins—vices that explode with deadly effect upon the scene of our relationships. And Paul says that we need to let *all* of *all* of them be put away from us. “Get rid of it all,” he warns, adding in another place that those who make a habit of “enmity, strife . . . [and] fits of anger . . . will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:20–21). This is serious. You cannot be right with God and be habitually trashing those who are made in his image.

While Paul tells us what *not* to do in anger, James tells us what *should* be done in love. Paul commands us to take off the old clothes of raging sin, and James tells us to put on a new wardrobe of heavenly grace. We need to pray for wisdom, he says (see James 1:5–7)—and such wisdom, which is from above, is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17). *Gentle* is the key word here. The Greek word behind it carries the meaning of being measured, mild, and moderate in our responses to others—the opposite of belligerent, argumentative, and quarrelsome. A calm and tranquil heart defuses angry conflict simply by refusing to enter it.

On occasion, some will be infuriated when a gentle person

Eph. 4:26), it is almost always wrong to make a lot of noise when we are. Loud anger is not a personality or cultural thing; it is a sin thing—and Paul tells us to be done with it.

refuses to share their fury. I've witnessed people rage against others for not raging back, because they wanted either some justification to keep raging or the satisfaction of pushing another person over the edge. But such are the exceptions. As a rule, a soft answer turns away wrath. And even if it does not, it is still the right path to take.

CHILLING IS A CHOICE

You may assume that you're not wired to chill. It's not who you are, and it's not possible for it ever to be. Some are peaceful types, while others are not so much. And you're convinced that you are among the not-so-much crowd. But don't despair. There. Is. Hope.

How long do you think you can go without losing your temper? Stop and think before you answer. The world has the flat-out wrong answer on this one, my friend. From Sesame Street days on up, a culture that is committed to unrestrained self-expression has programmed millions not to hold back when having an anger attack. I remember the scenes—and I'm guessing they're still standard fare on that venerable kids' show—when grownups extolled the virtues of venting to Cookie Monster, Bert, and Ernie. Let it out. Holler loud. Punch a pillow. Slam a door. Speak your mind. Be real. It's not healthy to hold it in. There are times when you've got to spew.

The mantras of self-expression, and the supposed perils of suppressed anger, have been repeated so long and so often that they have taken on "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" status for many. A generation has been bred to think that speaking your mind is more honorable than taming your tongue—that the greatest virtue is to let it all out via talk, tweet, text, or tirade. What does it matter if you're not sure it's true, or if there isn't any real need to say it? What does it matter if reputations are ruined and lives are destroyed? Nowadays, it seems that people are guilty

of anger mismanagement only if they *fail* to release the fury of accusing wrath. When we heat up and explode, leaving a host of temper-traumatized victims in our wake, we claim innocence: “I couldn’t help it. I had to speak my mind. I had to be real. I believe in calling it like I see it.” Funny how it’s always someone else’s issues we’re seeing.

Let me ask the question again: How long can we go without losing it? A day? Two days? A week? Anyone for a month? The answer is simply this: *we can go as long as we choose*. Chilling is a choice. In every conflict, we have at least a fleeting awareness when a moment of decision arrives. “I shouldn’t say this, but . . .” “I know that this isn’t right or fair, but . . .” “This is wrong, but . . .” “I shouldn’t be yelling, but . . .” Every conflict has a hinge point of hesitation—a full or split second when we pause at the decision intersection and *choose*.

FROM HYSTERICIS TO CALM

Back in the day, we had a volatile older couple who hovered on the fringes of our church. To say that Bert and Harriet had anger issues is like saying that Pompeii might want to keep an eye on Vesuvius, with each alternating as Vesuvius on any given day. I tried often to help them, but it was slow going. Compounding the problem was that they were in their seventies while I was still around forty. It’s always awkward to do intensive marriage counseling for people who are more than old enough to be your parents.

One evening, my post-dinner quiet was interrupted by a panicked call from Bert pleading for my help. It was a “clergy 911”—the kind that every pastor dreads. While it’s a privilege to serve in life’s war zones, it’s no fun to be called into a family crisis that’s been brewing for decades and to be expected somehow to fix it in minutes.

Over the phone, I could hear Harriet in the background, screaming hysterically. Her uncontrolled rage gushed with a

torrential force that required intervention. As I drove to their home, I prayed for help—and made sure to have a phone handy to call the other 911. Given her past psychological issues, I was pretty sure that Harriet would need to be restrained and hospitalized. That I found her crouching behind some large plants in her living room, still in raging hysterics, confirmed the worst of my fears.

As I observed Harriet's ongoing and escalating rage, an idea that was born of desperation came to my mind. It might work, given that I'd built up some relational equity with Harriet. I was semi-sure that she trusted me. So, quietly and slowly, I walked up to Harriet, put my hands gently on both her shoulders, looked her squarely in the eyes, and said with a gentle but *very* firm voice, "Harriet. Be *quiet*." It was the verbal equivalent of a lifeguard slapping a struggling swimmer whose panic has overcome her sense.

Harriet's eyes changed instantly. Their wild rage and fear gave way to calm. Within seconds, her hysterics stopped and her spirit quieted; she came out from behind the bushes and sat down beside me to begin a normal conversation. Two hours of relentless and unbridled rage had ended in mere moments. It was a matter of choice, as it almost always is.

Chapter 11 will show that what controls our hearts determines our emotions, words, and behavior. We will see that, just like Harriet, all of us who seem to be out of control and to have no power over our emotions can gain sudden self-control when a new desire tips the scales of our motivation in favor of self-restraint.

This is a key first step in communication. Self-control is a Holy Spirit-given ability (see Gal. 5:22–23) to restrain emotions, words, and actions and stay peacefully calm even when a storm hits. If you are a Christian, you have the power to say no to volatile, sinfully expressed anger. There isn't any temptation we face that we can't escape (see 1 Cor. 10:13). God's promises are all that we need for life and godliness (see 2 Peter 1:3–4). The grace that has saved us also teaches us to live self-controlled lives in which we renounce sinful ways by speaking a firm, committed, decisive,

and life-altering no to what is wrong (see Titus 2:11–12). God is at work in us to enable us both to “will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). He gives what it takes in order to chill.

BUT WHY IS CHILLING SO HARD?

But if it is true that God enables us to control our sinful choices, then why is chilling so hard? Why is it so much easier to speak of self-control than it is to exercise it—as our universally shared life experience clearly proves? “No human being can tame the tongue,” James asserts—and he has good reason to say so. Explosive anger is so commonplace and feels so natural that it seems more like an unavoidable human frailty than a matter of deliberate and correctible sin. But it is *both* weakness, which requires divine enablement, and wickedness, which requires personal attention and intentional action.

It is helpful to start recognizing the factors that catalyze our angry emotion. These do not *cause* our angry emotion—for nothing causes our angry reactions except the ruling desires and cravings of our own hearts (see James 4:1–2). But they do affect us and set us off. As we learn from various Bible characters, there are countless triggers that must be recognized and countered in our lives.

Angry Person(s)	Anger Trigger	Angry Act	Do They Chill?
Cain (Gen. 4:1–16)	rejection by God	murder	No. And God banishes him when he fails to repent.
Sarah (Gen. 21:8–10)	a bullied son	banishment of Ishmael and his mother	No. And millennia of strife ensue.

Angry Person(s)	Anger Trigger	Angry Act	Do They Chill?
Dinah's brothers (Gen. 34:5–30)	rape of their sister	trickery and violent vengeance	No. And they bring trouble for the family.
Joseph's brothers (Gen. 37:5–8, 18–28)	sibling rivalry	selling their brother into slavery and lying to their father	Yes. But only after years of hardship and grief.
Moses (Num. 20:10–13)	whining followers	disobedience to God's command	Yes. But only after losing his entrance into the prom- ised land.
Balaam (Num. 22:27–35)	a stubborn animal	beating his donkey	Yes. But only after he is confronted by an angel with a sword.
Saul (1 Sam. 18:6–11)	jealousy and insecurity	paranoia and attempted murder	No. And he and David continue to be at odds.
David (1 Sam. 25:1–13, 21–35)	injustice and ingratitude	planning a bloodbath	Yes. But only after Abigail confronts him.
Job (Job 23:1–7; 27:2; 40:2–8)	grief and suffering	question- ing God	Yes. But only after divine correction.

Angry Person(s)	Anger Trigger	Angry Act	Do They Chill?
Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:1–30)	a wounded ego	throwing three men into a fire	Yes. But only after divine intervention and power.
Jonah (Jonah 4:5–11)	removal of physical comfort	self-pity and a hardened heart	Unknown.
Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57–68)	unwanted truth	brutal injustice and torture	No. And he calls for Jesus's crucifixion.
James and John (Luke 9:51–55)	people's rejection of Jesus	asking if they can destroy the people with fire from heaven	Yes. But only after Jesus rebukes them.
Peter (John 18:10–11)	fear	cutting off a man's ear	Yes. But only after Jesus tells him to stop.
Paul (Acts 23:2–5)	physical assault	accidentally disrespecting a leader	Yes. But only after he real- izes his error.

Did you notice that there are familiar biblical heroes among the number of those who lost it from time to time? Let that comfort you as you go to war with your anger. Even the best of saints has anger triggers. We all do. And it helps us to be alert to what they are. Take another look at the “Anger Trigger” column to see how varied triggers can be, and consider how familiar the ones here are to your own life. At least twelve of them map on to my

own experience! Observe, too, that the anger catalysts are not always sinful in themselves, even though the angry acts are.

All of this is what makes chilling so hard. We lose our chill easily because we have so many emotional vulnerabilities and weak points—and because there are so many things that happen in this world that can legitimately make us angry, but which we nevertheless need to process with restraint. This is no easy task, but it is possible. Yet it will be possible only when we recognize the hair triggers that most often set off our own anger, become aware of when we are most vulnerable, and make sure that our trigger locks are in working order.

A GOD AND GOSPEL MOMENT

Another thing that helps our pursuit of self-control is an awareness of what God is like and of how we are to be like him. Paul reminds us of this in Colossians 3:8–10 when he teaches that hotheaded sins are not fitting for those of us who “have put on the new self, which is being renewed . . . after the image of its creator” (v. 10). When we fail to chill, we fail to be like God. We misrepresent the image in us when we attack the image in others.

Consider for a moment the One whose image we bear. *God is not hot-tempered*. He is patient and gentle with us every day. When we think about chilling, we are thinking about being like God—about treating others the way God treats us.

Way back in Exodus 33:18–19, Moses prayed, “Please show me your glory,” to which God responded, “I will make all my goodness pass before you.” Then,

The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands. (Ex. 34:5–7)

When God revealed his glorious goodness to Moses, what did he say? What is the blazing center of his manifest presence? God is *merciful and gracious, slow to anger*. The Hebrew term for *slow* simply means “long.” You and I have to offend God many times, over a very long time, without any repentance, before his fuse burns down. His mercy and grace in the face of human sin are long-suffering. There is nothing of the impulsive, the reactionary, the rash, or the explosive about God.

Herein lies one facet of the glory of God. He is a patient and gentle God. His responses to our sins are never volatile. When he does get angry at human sin, it is always proportionate—in keeping with holiness, patience, and justice. Our text teaches us that it is the glory of God that he is long-fused and gentle in response to all our junk. Moses saw God’s glory—even if but a fringe of it—and what he saw was that God is amazingly merciful and wonderfully slow to anger. And I am glad.

One of the great wonders of my life is that God hasn’t squashed me today. Despite my many sins, he hasn’t yelled and screamed, or pounded his fist, or slammed the door and walked away. Quite the opposite—he has poured out kindness upon kindness. And when he has confronted me, it hasn’t been with severe word and stern face. It has been with a firm but ever-so-gentle whisper to my conscience, a quiet voice in my inner man, a wooing of my heart toward greater holiness, a renewed invitation to be like him.

This is God’s way, and it is his glory. He is patient about our impatience, calm in the face of our clamor, quiet while correcting our quarreling. He holds his tongue and stills his emotions, even while we fail to do the same. When we chill, we mirror the heart of God. We offer to others what has been so gloriously given to us.

WHEN THE RINGTONE SOUNDS

Dinner is prepared. The table is set. The kids’ hands are washed. Everything is nearly ready. But the bliss is interrupted

when mischievous little Cadan does his milk version of a Gatorade victory celebration, thoroughly damping everything and dousing the meatloaf. After a momentary out-of-body experience in which you hover above your world gone awry, you look, as old Mr. Wodehouse would say, “like a tomato struggling for self-expression.”³ Cadan quickly rues his celebration—not because he’s made a mess of dinner but because you, his parent, have suddenly transformed into a fire-breathing dragon.

You’ve got flaming eyes and steaming ears. As your lid flips, you find your tongue. Your volcanic rant spews on, blaming, shaming, and defaming in raw molten anger. And with each passing second, the little guy puddles further into fear and shame.

And then your church small group leader’s (or, even worse, your *pastor’s*) ringtone goes off on you. It’s playing the new hit “I Need to Save Face,” and suddenly it’s decision time. You know how this plays out, right? Imagine Cadan’s awe when before his wondering eyes you transform from dragon to lamb and, with an artificially sweetened tone, you pick up the phone and offer the nicest, kindest, gentlest, most welcoming “Hello” the world has ever heard.

Split-second self-control. Instant chill. It’s enough to make you think, isn’t it? Maybe we don’t just *have* to let it out after all. When a temper tantrum can be stilled in a second, it proves at least one thing: chilling is a choice.

So the next time your button gets pushed, what will you choose? To be like God (see Eph. 4:31–5:2), or to play the fool (see Prov. 14:29)? To indulge angry passion, or to respect the image? God calls us to imitate him—to renounce angry outbursts, temper flare-ups, and volatile eruptions and to deplore them all for the sins that they are. Life with others calls for light without heat. Conversations go nowhere, and relationships don’t get even that far, unless we chill.

3. P. G. Wodehouse, *Right Ho, Jeeves* (1934; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 211.

So let's be like God, and, with the assurance that he will enable what he commands, let's put the lid on it and calm down.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How often do you lose your temper?
2. How does your anger normally manifest itself (for example, through yelling, moping, sulking, cursing, and so on)?
3. What are frequent triggers for your anger?
4. If “to keep from war while in a spat [you need to] turn down your anger thermostat,” what might be some helpful steps you could take to lower your temperature before you speak?
5. Describe a time when you failed to chill. Was there a moment when you were conscious of making a choice in your anger—when you knew you should stop? How did you respond to it?