

Keep Your Cool



Read [Proverbs 17:27](#) (ESV)

“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.”

Reflect

Can you think of a time when you’ve blown it by blowing up instead of keeping your cool? How might the situation have been improved if you had “restrained your words” at that moment?

Have you ever heard the idiom “cooler heads prevail”? Merriam-Webster gives this explanation: “calmer or less angry people have a dominant influence.” Sometimes, during tense and potentially volatile situations, we hear the saying used more like a prayer: “May cooler heads prevail!” We want the party with an even-temper to win out. You see, we all know that hot heads usually make bad decisions. We see this play out in the world of politics all the time! We are much more likely to listen and follow the lead of an even-tempered person speaking rationally than an angry person raging like a lunatic. Because of this, people who can keep their cool in tense and frustrating situations can have a powerful influence on others.

Today, we are reading a proverb of King Solomon, a man known for his great wisdom. In this proverb, he states that people who are wise and understanding are able to control their tempers. They don’t spout off in anger but rather they hold back and watch their mouths. Refraining from speaking in a moment of anger can be considered wise for many reasons.

On the one hand, restraining our words keeps us from saying something in the heat of the moment that we later regret. No doubt we’ve all blown it at some point in our lives and flung angry, nasty words that we later regret in someone’s face causing pain and division. But words can’t be unsaid, and careless words can cause big problems.

Maybe you’ve seen the toothpaste illustration floating around social media. You take a tube of toothpaste and squirt all of it out of the tube. Then, your challenge is to try to put the toothpaste back in the tube. It can’t be done. Likewise, we can’t put our words back in our mouths once they leave our lips. The wise know this and give themselves time to calm down and think before they speak.

But another benefit to keeping a cool spirit in the heat of the moment is that you often gain understanding that helps solve the issue peacefully. Again, here is the wisdom James was talking about when he stressed the importance of being “quick to listen and slow to speak” ([James 1:19](#)). When we restrain our words and react calmly, it gives us the opportunity to listen to the point of view of others. We can collect information from the other parties involved and gain a better understanding of the situation. Maybe we can even facilitate rational discussions about how to come to agreements over hot-button issues.

Friends, none of us are perfect. We have all lost our cool and blown it. But the regret that follows those moments has likely proven the wisdom in this proverb. It isn’t wise to let whatever words are on the tip of your tongue fly out of our mouths when we are angry. But if you are feeling discouraged in this area, take heart. As believers in Christ, we have the help of the Holy Spirit. [Galatians 5:16](#) says, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Walking by the Spirit means daily asking the Spirit to guide you and submitting to His control. When the Spirit is in control of your life, you’ll grow in godliness and righteousness. Remember, patience and self-control are fruits of the Spirit’s work in our lives ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). So, if you are struggling with lashing out in anger, seek the Lord. Ask Him to help you control your anger so it doesn’t control you.

Respond

Lord, I confess that sometimes my anger controls me rather than the other way around. Please forgive me for sinning against You and others when I speak harshly out of anger. I need Your help learning to restrain my words. Please cultivate the fruit of Your Holy Spirit in my life and help me to be wise, self-controlled, and patient. Amen.

Reveal

The next time you’re tempted to respond in anger, pause and pray before speaking. Later, share with a trusted friend how God helped you respond with patience, and encourage each other to grow in the Spirit’s fruit of self-control.