

A Handful of Dog Ears

Prov. 26:17—“*He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.*”

“*strife*” = contention; disagreement; quarrel; controversy

“*meddleth*” = The word meddle means to **intrude or interfere in the affairs or business of others.**

- **Dt.2:4-5, 19**—God warned Israel to not get involved in the affairs of the Edomites or the Ammonites or what God had given to them.
- **Prov. 17:14**— The illustration is like tipping over a 55 gal drum of water. Once it’s tipped over, there is no stopping the water from going every where. If you meddle with contention, it will eventually spread to strife.
- **20:3**—It is foolish to meddle. When a wise man sees an argument coming, he drops the matter before it turns into something serious (20:3).
- **20:19**—Don’t get tangled up with a talebearer.
- **26:17**—A person who meddles with something that is none of his business is like a person trying to separate two dogs that are fighting. He’s got a hand full of dog ears.

The modern cliché is “Mind your own business”—“*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters*” (1 Pet. 4:15). Paul admonishes, “*study to be quiet, and to do your own business*” (1 Thess. 4:11).

Like the old adage, “Leave sleeping dogs lie.” But we awaken them and usually to our own detriment.

I. The DISCERNING of the dispute. “*He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him...*”

➡ It is a random observation. Maybe in an email or something you read on Facebook.

A. Moses learned this awful lesson when he interfered in a dispute between two brethren (Ex. 2:11-14).

1. ILLUS: Jesus refused to get involved over disputes between two brothers (Luke:12:13-15)
 2. The same thing happened between Martha and Mary (Luke 10:40).
- B. You probably don't know the whole story, or don't have all the facts.
1. You only know one side of the controversy.
 2. An offended person usually tries to get as many people on their side to turn others against their adversary before making a case.
 3. Never listen to a complaint without the other person being present.
- C. Beware of taking sides with the offended person.
1. Our God given role in contentious situations is to a peacemaker.
 2. But once you've taken sides, you have curtailed your effectiveness as a peacemaker. The key is in Gal. 6:1.
 3. The Bible method of handling an offense is in Matthew 18:15-17 and gain your brother.
- D. By getting involved you take away the pressure or incentive for the person to get right.
- ➔It could be the contention is between the person and God, and God is trying to get the person right. You don't want to interfere when God is dealing with someone in a conflict.

II. **The DANGER of meddling.** *"...is like one that taketh a dog by the ears."*

- A. Entanglement — When you have a hand full of dog ears, you cannot do anything else but hang on to that dog.
1. ILLUS: The Uncle Remus tale about Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox and the Tar-Baby illustrates the truth of Proverbs 26:17 perfectly. Unable to catch Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox decides to capitalize on Brer Rabbit's inability to avoid intruding into matters that didn't concern him:

Brer Fox got some tar and fixed up a contraption that he called a Tar-Baby.

When he finished making her, he put a straw hat on her head and sat it on the

side of the road. Brer Fox, he lay low in the bushes to see what would happen.

He didn't wait long, 'cause by and by Brer Rabbit came pacing down the road—lippity-clippity, clippity-lippity—just as sassy as a jaybird.

Brer Rabbit passed by when he saw the Tar-Baby and then he sat back on his hind legs like he was astonished. The Tar-Baby just sat there.

"Good morning!" says Brer Rabbit. "Nice weather we're having this morning." Tar-Baby didn't say a word.

"How are you feeling this morning?" says Brer Rabbit. But the Tar-Baby didn't say a thing.

"What is the matter with you? Are you deaf?" says Brer Rabbit. "Cause if you are, I can holler louder." The Tar-Baby stayed still.

"You're stuck-up, that's what's wrong with you. You think you're too good to talk to me," says Brer Rabbit. "And I'm going to cure you, that's what I'm going to do." But Tar-Baby didn't say a word.

"I'm going to teach you how to talk to respectable folks if it's my last act," says Brer Rabbit. "If you don't take off that hat and say howdy, I'm going to bust you wide open," says he. Tar-Baby stayed still.

Brer Rabbit kept on asking her why she wouldn't talk and the Tar-Baby kept on saying nothing until Brer Rabbit finally drew back his fist, he did, and blip—he hit the Tar-Baby on the jaw. But his fist stuck in the tar and he couldn't pull it loose.

"If you don't let me loose, I'm going to hit you again," says Brer Rabbit, and with that he drew back his other fist and blap—he hit the Tar-Baby with the other hand and that one stuck fast too.

"Turn me loose, before I kick the stuffing out of you," says Brer Rabbit, but the Tar-Baby just sat there. She just held on and then Brer Rabbit jumped her with both his feet.

Then Brer Rabbit yelled out that if that Tar-Baby didn't turn him loose, he was going to butt her crank-sided. Then he butted her and his head got stuck.

Brer Fox walked out from behind the bushes and strolled over to Brer Rabbit, looking as innocent as a mockingbird.

"Howdy, Brer Rabbit," says Brer Fox. "You look sort of stuck up this morning." And he rolled on the ground and laughed and laughed until he couldn't laugh anymore. "Well, I expect I got you this time, Brer Rabbit. You've been around here sassing after me and getting into things that's none of your business," says Brer Fox. "Who asked you to come and strike up a conversation with this Tar-Baby? And who stuck you up the way you are? Nobody in the round world. You just jammed yourself into that Tar-Baby without waiting for an invitation. There you are and there you'll stay until I fix up a brushpile and fire it up, 'cause I'm going to barbecue you today, for sure," says Brer Fox.

2. The devil will try to get us involved in things that really don't matter to what God has called us to do.

- Our hands need to be put to the plow. If your hands are full of dog ears, then they cannot be full of plow!
 - Our hands need to be lifted in prayer.
 - Our hands need to be clapped in praise.
- B. Getting tangled up with another person's grievance often leads to **"taking up another's offense"** (Ps. 15:3 - "reproach" = complaint; contention; offense)
1. Listening to the reproaches, hurts, resentments or bitterness of someone else is setting you up for trouble.
 - ➡ If someone is rude to your friend, and your friend shares their complaint with you, then you're likely going to "take up their offense." You become angry, resentful, or bitter also.
 2. You were not the one offended.
 3. If you are hurt, it is totally irresponsible to involve others in your hurts and judgments. As far as I can see, we have no right to go to anyone except God and the offender, unless we are really at a loss as to what we should do. And then we need to go for counseling, not to our "most favorite person to talk to."
- C. You might get bit. No dog enjoys to be grabbed by the ears. Has your mother ever grabbed you by the ears?
1. Amaziah learned this lesson the hard way (2 Kings 14:8-14). The parable of the thistle and the cedar was an insulting way of saying, "If you stay home and mind your own business so you won't get hurt."
 2. Josiah died with his hands full of dog ears (2 Chron. 35:20-24).
 3. Domestic disputes are among the most difficult calls for a cop to make.

III. The **DECISION** to decline.

- A. Most meddling is futile and usually never helps matters. It is a waste of time and energy. It usually makes matters worse!
- B. It is best to just keep passing by!

SUMMATION: Dr. Peter Ruckman gives some good advice here: "Don't judge cases that are not in your courtroom!" Amen!

Your comments are welcomed. Please [CLICK HERE](#).