



Self-Control

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

James 1:19-20 (NRSV)

From click bait to trolling, soliciting a reaction has become a conniving skill in today's world. The goal is to get you to embrace the rhythm of "emotionally react and speak." Now, don't get me wrong, sometimes swift action is required. However, James is calling us to a rhythm that isn't concerned with immediacy but righteousness. Don't make the mistake of thinking this new rhythm is easy. Those who solicit our reactions prey on our pain and suffering. They know how to speak in such a way that drives deep into our bones. However, James invites us to let go of the "react and speak" patterns of this world and embrace a new pattern of being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. When we are quick to listen and slow to speak it gives us time to take a deep breath, process, and allow our thoughts and emotions to be bathed in the Holy Spirit. Righteous anger that comes from the Spirit and not emotional anger birthed in us may certainly be an appropriate response to injustice. It's amazing how often this sacred rhythm ends with not repaying evil with evil but a lament and deeper understanding of God's kingdom and our calling. It's also interesting how self-control is found at the end of the list of fruits of the Spirit. It's as if Paul was reminding us that self-control supplies the necessary space for all other fruits to grow and give witness to Jesus.

action

Heavenly Father, forgive me of those moments when I am more concerned with giving my opinion than being shaped in your righteousness. May I not get seduced into the patterns of this world, but may you produce self-control in me so that your fruit might be seen in all that I do.

Find opportunities to practice the quick to listen and slow to speak rhythm. Before reacting to a post on social media or in a conversation take a breath, surrender your emotions, and ask the Holy Spirit to shape your response. Create space for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness to grow.