



A Spiritual Encouragement Message
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Triggered

by Andrew Lemus

On Tuesday I was driving to the church building, after dropping Anderson off at school, happy, content, and in a great mood. I was around the corner from the building on Main Street and there was a homeless man, with a cart overflowing with all his possessions, walking on the side of the road. I slowed down, merged over, and smiled at him as I passed on by. With an angry expression and puffed out chest he looked right into my eyes and shouted a very extreme obscenity at me. The second word of his phrase was “you!”. It took a moment but as I continued to drive down the road I got more and more upset. Thoughts of “who does he think he is,” “I should turn around and see if he would say that to my face,” and “I want to go back and punch that guy” raced through my mind and my emotions turned to frustration, anger, and bitterness. I was triggered!

As we walk in this world, interacting with different people and things, we encounter various situations that trigger us. Kids talk about those who are triggered when they get upset about losing in a video game. Therapists talk about a trigger being a situation (smell, sound, sight, action, etc.) that leads to a thought that produces inappropriate emotions and actions. Most importantly, James speaks of being tempted which in many ways seem to be synonymous with being triggered. He wrote,

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. James 1:13-15

When it comes to being tempted or triggered it is impossible to find anyone that endured it like our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We read about it in the gospels and the scriptures reveal that although

He was tempted in every way, He never gave in and sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus, the Son of God and Messiah, was laughed at, mocked, called names, rejected, undermined, gossiped about, humiliated, beaten, spit on, nailed to a cross, killed, and so much more. In the midst of all of these trials, hardships, and temptations our Lord never once responded wickedly, but each and every time responded with love. What a remarkable king we have!

How did He do it? How did He overcome? How was He able to love those who treated Him so improperly? I think the answer to this question is one for us to hold onto as we live our lives, as we are triggered and tempted by various obstacles and people. Jesus never lost sight of how valuable each soul was, how every person was made in His image, and that even the most wicked among Him had the ability and potential to overcome sin and fulfill their divine purpose (Gen. 1:6; John 3:16; 2Peter 3:9). Jesus saw worth, value, and purpose in all men. Motivated by that perspective he humbly and patiently worked with rebellious men to bring them along to repentance.

I was talking with one of our brothers in Christ and told him about the situation on Tuesday with the homeless man and how it triggered me. He encouraged me to consider the situation from the homeless man's perspective. He is homeless, his possessions consisted of what filled a grocery cart, he likely slept in the cold on the street the night before, it was early in the morning and still cold, and now he watches this man drive down the road in his nice warm minivan, joyful and smiling at this cold, poor, and beaten man walking down the side of the road. By his reaction, I no doubt triggered him! How we perceive people in the midst of our temptations can mean the difference between responding in love or sin.

Since the inception of mankind God sought to redeem and reconcile a lost, disobedient, and obstinate people. To accomplish His goal of bringing mankind back into a relationship with Him, He patiently planned, worked, and established the gospel, through which all men can be saved (Romans 1:16, 5:1-11). I can't imagine the grief and pain God felt as He watched His creation muddle through this life in subjection to sin and the jubilation when His plan was complete through which man could be redeemed. Let us view the world like God, so that when we are triggered, we will not repay evil for evil but instead will bless and pray for those who are our adversaries. When triggered and tempted, follow Jesus.