

## LET A COOLER HEAD PREVAIL

Road rage is a national problem that appears to be getting worse. All of us have witnessed it in one form or another.

*Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia, defines it as “aggressive or angry behavior by a driver of an automobile or other road vehicle which includes rude gestures, verbal insults, physical threats or dangerous driving methods targeted toward another driver in an effort to intimidate or release frustration. Road rage can lead to altercations, assaults and collisions that result in serious physical injuries or even death. It can be thought of as an extreme case of aggressive driving.”



The term originated in the United States in 1987-1989 by newscasters at a television station in Los Angeles when a rash of freeway shootings occurred. A 2007 study of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas concluded that the cities with the least courteous drivers (most road rage) are Miami, Phoenix, New York, Los Angeles and Boston. The cities with the most courteous drivers (least road rage) are Minneapolis, Nashville, St. Louis, Seattle and Atlanta. In spite of this, however, in 2009, New York, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Atlanta and Minneapolis/St. Paul were rated the top five “Road Rage Capitals” of the U.S.

It seems there is something about driving a car that brings out the worst in many people.

I read recently about the editor of a denominational publication driving in a congested city, and a long, baby-blue Cadillac started to merge into his lane. “Had I not veered onto the shoulder, we would have wrecked. I was furious,” he said. “What were they thinking? Who taught them how to drive? I could just feel my pulse and blood pressure rising.”

But here is what he discovered: “As I sped around them to show them my displeasure, I saw in the driver’s seat an older lady with a neck brace on. She had an injury that kept her from checking her blind spot. Suddenly, my rage melted into shame and empathy. I drove on, embarrassed that I had gotten so worked up over a simple mistake.”

The author of the Book of Proverbs and the Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians, both offered cautions about our anger. At times, anger is natural and necessary, but how we handle our anger is the crucial point. Letting it control us is often where the trouble begins. We can easily assume the worst about people and assign the most corrupt motives for their actions – apparently because we feel vindicated for venting our anger.

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But if we could simply take the time to consider the other person's feelings or what his or her circumstances may be, we could better interpret situations and respond appropriately, instead of feeling shame or regret over our anger.

Imagine how many more relational bridges could be built, how many more conflicts could be avoided, and how much more peaceful our lives would be if we would choose wisdom and let cooler heads prevail.

*A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man holds it in check (Proverbs 29:11 HCSB).*

– Beecher Hunter