

Life is not Perfect

*Nothing is as frustrating as arguing with
someone who knows what he's talking about.*

Sam Ewing

The door opened and a young man rushed into The Bodhi Tree Café, stomping his way over to the counter and taking a seat.

“Menu!” he demanded of the bartender, a middle-aged balding gentleman with a pot belly, who was busy talking with two businessmen at the other end of the counter.

The bartender hurried over and slid a menu in front of his surly customer. “Sorry I took so long.”

The young man grunted and started looking at the menu while the bartender waited patiently.

“I’ll have a burger, fries and a cola.”

The bartender put in the order and then returned to his unhappy customer. “That’ll just be a couple of minutes.”

“Fine,” his customer responded without looking up from staring at an invisible spot on the counter.

“Nice weather we’re having.”

“I guess.”

“They said it might rain tomorrow.”

“Look, I really just need to be alone right now.”

“I can see that. It just seems to me that no one should be alone on a nice day like this.”

“Fine, I’m glad you’re having a nice day. For me, it’s not going so hot.”

“Sorry to hear that. Maybe talking about it will help.”

“Look, I just had a big fight with my girlfriend. Can you help me with that?”

“Probably not,” the bartender admitted. “Then again, maybe I can suggest a way that you can.”

“Really? You don’t even know her!”

“That’s true, and I don’t even need to know what the fight was about.”

“But you still think that you can help me?” asked the young man, not hiding the contempt in his voice.

“Well,” began the bartender, “I know it takes two to have an argument and that both sides are in the wrong.”

“How can you possibly know that without knowing what the fight was about?”

The bartender smiled. “Uncontrolled anger can be a serious problem. Once we get angry, our emotions take over and logic flies out the window. Getting angry is losing control and when we lose control bad things happen. We often do or say things we’ll later regret.”

“Some bad things were definitely said today.”

“I know an old story that might explain it better,” suggested the bartender.

“I’m not really in the mood for a story.”

“I promise you, it’s a short one. *In ancient times a man had to travel to a distant village so he hired a donkey to carry him. It was a very hot day and after traveling a good distance the donkey’s owner called a halt so they could rest. It was the middle of nowhere and the only shade available was that cast by the donkey. The traveler and the owner began to quarrel over who should get to sit in the shade. The traveler believed the shade should be his because he was renting the donkey. The owner felt the shade should be his because he had rented out the donkey only to carry the traveler, not to supply shade. The argument between the two men escalated and soon it came to blows with both men rolling around on the ground, which frightened the donkey into running away. In the end, both men were without shade and had to walk the rest of the way.*”

“So when you said we were both wrong, you meant because we got angry with each other.”

The bartender nodded in agreement. “Samaria Maxamus said, ‘Anger itself does more harm than the condition that caused it.’ When we get angry, there is only a slim chance that it will solve the problem and a much greater chance that it’ll create new ones. Everyone gets angry. What’s important is not what happened, but how it’s handled.”

“So you think I handled it poorly?”

“I know that life isn’t perfect. She’s not perfect and neither are you or I. I know that we all make mistakes, but letting our anger control our words and actions is probably the biggest mistake we can make.”

“But everyone gets angry, especially when someone does or says something to hurt you.”

“You are absolutely right, everyone gets angry,” the bartender admitted. “Unfortunately, anger can also be a weapon that another tricks us into using against ourselves. I like to remind myself that anger is only one letter away from danger. At home it can mean a damaged relationship, in public it can mean a confrontation with a stranger, and at work it can mean getting fired or skipped over for promotion.”

“I guess I never thought of my anger as being a big problem until now.”

“Toxins pollute the body and anger pollutes the mind,” continued the bartender. “The easiest way for a situation to get out of control is for someone to get angry. When we feel ourselves getting angry little warning lights should start flashing in our heads.”

“The problem is that there are times when I can’t help getting angry. I guess it’s my nature.”

“Well, then show me some of that anger.”

“Right now? It takes something to set me off.”

“Well, then anger isn’t your nature, it’s either a reaction or a learned response. You need to find a new way of responding when things don’t go your way. Everyone gets angry, the trick is

realizing what's happening and then gaining back control as quickly as possible.”

“Well, if there is a secret to controlling my anger I wish you'd share it with me.”

“I thought you'd never ask,” the bartender answered with a smile.

