

RED HOT LOVE

Not too long ago as I pulled up to a red light, I caught some commotion from the corner of my eye. As I turned my head, I saw that the man in the car next to me was reaching into his backseat and repeatedly punching a little girl. For a split second, her eyes met mine. All I saw was fear and pain. I will never forget that agonized stare.

Spontaneously, I slammed my horn and jumped out of my car just as he sped through the intersection running the red light.

I was speechless. My stomach clenched. My heart slammed with anger. I stood there dazed by what I had just witnessed. The honk of a horn yanked me back to reality as a red convertible raced around me through the green light.

Was my anger justified?

Wasn't that the right emotional response?

Of course it was!

If a grown man punching a little girl didn't make me angry, you'd think I was either mentally deranged or cruel-hearted. And you'd be right.

Okay, new scenario.

A dictator takes an entire nation under his mesmerizing control. The children are brain washed with an ideology of hate and the people are lulled into a worldview that is fundamentally untrue. The dictator's army begins a mass killing campaign. Other powerful nations watch the horrific sight from a distance. Finally, the inaction breaks and the nations decide they must pounce upon the monster and his army. Hitler and the Third Reich are crushed.

Were the allied nations justified in their rage against the Nazi regime?

Of course they were.

Okay, one last story.

In another time and another place, there's group of nations born and bred for violence and oppression. People are disposable. Taken into slavery nearly from birth, children are raised to perpetuate abuse from one generation to the next. Women are used as instruments of sick and violent perversion. Human sacrifice is common. The entire culture is defined by abuse and horror.

RED HOT LOVE CONTINUED

But then, as with our previous two scenarios, the situation arouses indignation, this time from a mighty king who decides to intervene. His army invades, conquers, and establishes a society based on law, one that stands for justice and will not enable abuse.

Again, same question: Was the king's anger justified?

Most of us would say yes.

But do your feelings change when I tell you that this last story is the account in Scripture of God commanding the nation of Israel to conquer the Canaanite tribes?

It's interesting, isn't it? For some reason we get angry at child abuse, and we applaud the invasion of Nazi Germany, but then we struggle when God gets angry at evil and takes action against it.

For some reason God gets a bad rap for His anger against evil.

But should He?

Recently a guy told me he could never love a God who gets angry. I told him I could never love a God who doesn't. For many, the idea of anger and love existing in the same deity is inconceivable.

Really?

So God intervened
to preserve the
human race.

Richard Dawkins, who is currently the most popular atheistic author on the planet, goes so far as to say that the God of the Bible is a "psychopath" because of the stories in Scripture that depict God as getting angry at evil and intervening to stop it.

But when I read the stories in the Bible, I don't see a psychopath. Far from it!

Consider the story of the Flood. The human race had come to a place where "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And then the Bible says that God was "grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:5-6).

Did you catch that?

"Grieved in His heart."

That doesn't sound like a psychopath!

Things were so bad that God said, "The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence" (Genesis 6:13). In other words, humanity was on the verge of plunging itself into extinction by its own brutality. So God intervened to preserve the human race. He started over by inviting all those who were willing to stop the cycle of violence and begin again.

The truth is, love includes anger in the face of evil, not because it's cruel, but because it cares so deeply. God isn't against people. He's against evil and suffering. He's in favor of justice. The fact that God is love means that some things necessarily make God angry.

Are you really prepared to believe that love and anger are incompatible?

I'm not.