

# Raging Speech

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As you've probably heard by now, a comedian named Michael Richards (Kramer from *Seinfeld*) was caught on tape launching into a profane, ethnically demeaning tirade while doing a comedy show. Audience members had heckled him until he lost control and went on a verbal rampage.

As the media begins its analysis of the situation, one reporter noted that in today's society, where *every-one* has a camcorder, camera phone or other recording device at hand, celebrities, politicians and others in the public eye should expect that anything they say will make the airwaves.

You see, the world is used to speaking its mind in private venues, then turning to rehearsed sound bites for public consumption. In other words, many are experts at being two-faced, or "double tongued" as the Scriptures call it (1 Tim 3:8; cf. Jas 4:8). But Christians, of all people, should have a sense of being "on air" at all times because our words are spoken in the hearing of God.

The debate also concerns how seriously to take one's words when caught in some indiscretion. Mel Gibson, Andrew Young, now Michael Richards – and others who have been caught red-faced – have all denied ownership of the words: "Please know from my heart that I am not an anti-Semite. I am not a bigot" (Gibson); "It's against everything I ever thought in my life" (Young); "I am not a racist. That's what is so insane about this" (Richards). We often suppress our true feelings by considerations such as courtesy, fear of social ostracism or even self-denial. But when emotions boil, when we are provoked, mistreated or fearful, our true thoughts often come to the surface.

Which brings us to the subject of rage. We must be very careful when circumstances provoke us to great anger and frustration. We may rehearse explosive conversations with our opponents, ponder "what I'd really like to tell 'em." But we must exercise restraint, think about the exaggeration of the situation, remind ourselves that blowing up will probably create irreparable damage.

These thoughts from Dr. Manny Alvarez via Fox News:

Rage is dangerous because as a person loses control, he can say things that he normally would suppress and even become violent. A moment of losing control can change one's life forever. You can lose your job, your relationships, or can wind up in jail. The consequences for the individual can also be financial loss and psychological injury. The consequences for the victim are usually worse and can include long-lasting psychological scars and/or physical trauma ...

When people have an emotional meltdown they tend to say many inappropriate things — Yet after the fact many reflect that it is not who they really are? Truth or fiction?

Some people will not like the consequences of their behavior and for that reason will try to retract their actions by offering an apology. But, in fact, the behavior actually reflects who they really are and are expressing feelings that are usually suppressed. Others will sincerely regret what was said or done and will carry the guilt for some time. In both cases, the individual's life will be changed after an episode of rage. Some people will learn and change their behavior; others will continue with their behavior especially if the consequences are benign. For those that have multiple episodes of rage, it will be more difficult to explain that they did not mean what was said or done.

Note some Proverbs:

- A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.
- He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.
- A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.
- In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise (29:11; 13:3; 25:11; 10:18).