

What an Angry Man in a Bus Station can Teach us about Terrorism.

It was Christmas-time at a crowded bus station. People were dressed in their fine clothes waiting to visit loved ones for the holiday. There were people carrying presents adorned with ribbons and bows of green and red. Everyone was smiling and singing. It was a festive moment.

Though one man stood out in the crowd. Why? Because he was rude and obnoxious. He had an angry face filled with hatred; you could see it in his eyes. His forehead was crinkled and he glared at anyone he made eye contact with.

The man reeked of body odor, and his physical appearance was disheveled. He wore mangled clothes, and his facial hair was matted together.

His language was obscene, and under his breath he was cursing at everyone. Not only that, but he was obscenely drunk. He teetered and stammered as he bumped into anyone in his path. He had no concern for the space of others.

People at the bus station were getting upset at the actions of this vile man. Many of them decided to push him back when he bumped into them.

One young man, pushed the drunken man when he bumped into him, and said, "Watch where you're going, Jerk."

As the man pushed the drunken man, he became easily off balance and bumped into more people. Everyone started pushing back and yelling things like, "Jerk, Scum."

This only fueled the anger already in the man's heart. He cursed louder and became more obscene. Before you knew it, everyone in the bus station was full of anger and disgust.

Suddenly one young man who couldn't take it any more and took it upon himself to teach the old man a lesson, pushed the drunken man so hard that he fell over and landed near a woman sitting on a bench with her eight-year-old daughter.

The eight-year-old girl looked at the man trying to get up, and then looked at her mom. "We should help him, don't you think?" she asked her mom.

The mother responded, "Normally, dear, we'd help, but not in this situation. This is different." The mother silently prayed that the vile man would not come over and disturb them.

Suddenly, the little girl got up and went over to the man, who had at this time stood up.

The little girl looked the man directly in the eyes and said, "Sir, why are you so angry?"

The drunken man slurred and yelled at the little girl to go away. "Leave me alone," he yelled.

The little girl was persistent. She pulled on his shirt and got the man's attention.

“Leave me alone, get away from me,” he slurred.

The little girl again, looked him in the eyes and said, “The reason I asked is because I was wondering if there was anything I could do to help?”

The man froze in his tracks. The angry look on his face softened, and he broke into tears.

The three of them; the drunken man, the little girl and the mother, cried together.

They found out that a year ago, the drunken man’s wife had died. They had been living paycheck to paycheck as it was and with the high cost of funeral expenses, and the downgrade to only one salary, the man took a turn for the worse. He lost his car and lost his home, and most importantly, he lost the love of his life. He became homeless.

On that day, the year anniversary of his wife’s death, he had sold his only winter jacket in order to get bus fare so he could visit his wife at the cemetery.

One may ask how the above story relates to terrorism and the tragedy of 9/11? Well, the story above demonstrates three principles that parallel the tragedy of September 11th.

The first is that behind every act of lashing out in anger, there is a deep-rooted pain. We may not know what that pain is, but the outward manifestation is anger. Like the drunk man in the bus station, all we see on the outside is a disgusting man who has no respect for others. Yet, we didn’t know his situation, we couldn’t comprehend his pain. We just saw the outside manifestation of his anger. Yet, all anger has pain at its root. A Course in Miracles says everything is love, or a call for love. Most people lashing out in anger have such deep-rooted pain, that what they are really doing is calling for love.

We must look at the cause of every problem. I ask all of us to not just look at the outward manifestation, which was the act of terrorism but to look at the cause behind the bombing and to remember that behind every lashing out in anger there is a deep-rooted pain.

Second, anger begets anger. In the above story, the angry man angered others. When the people at the bus station retaliated with anger it only fueled the anger that was already in the man’s heart. Eventually, the anger spread throughout the whole bus station, leaving everyone angry. Yet the problem still continued, and was even compounded.

I heard that in Native American tradition they have a saying that says the man who seeks revenge must dig two graves, one for the person he is seeking revenge upon, and one for himself. This illustrates the principal that anger only begets more anger.

The last principle illustrated in the above example, was that the only thing that could dissolve the man's anger was the pure, innocent love of a child who cared enough to find out what was going on inside the man.

We've all heard the quote from Gandhi that said, "the pure love of one person can offset the hatred of thousands." What a powerful illustration of the power of love. They have now begun to prove scientifically and medically that a person's presence has an energetic effect on others, either positive or negative. We witness this in our daily lives. Have you ever been around a co-worker for example, who was always stressed, high-strung, rude, etc. and then left that person's presence and felt stressed and in high gear? Or, what about the opposite? Have you ever been around someone who was so bubbly and fun to be around, that when you left you were smiling and nice to others as well?

St. Francis of Assisi said that "while we proclaim peace with our lips, it is more important to have it fully in our hearts." The above examples show us that peace and love happen within, at the individual level, and then spread like wildfire to the hearts and minds of everyone.

Author Biography:

Lisa Hepner is the author of *Peaceful Earth: Spiritual Perspectives on Hope and Healing Beyond Terrorism* which contains stories from great spiritual leaders like Neale Donald Walsch, Marianne Williamson, Alan Cohen, Jean Houston, Dan Millman and more regarding the tragedy of 9/11. For more information see www.peacefulearth.org. You may order the book from amazon.com or your local store.