

Faith and Family Business: Taking a Hit (Proverbs 12:16)

By [Dr. Bill Long](#)

One of the most difficult tasks confronting those in family businesses is knowing how to respond either to provocation, attack or even unsubstantiated gossip that relates to you or your business. If we were to look at the world around us, the answer is pretty clear: when someone “crosses” you, respond with quick, direct, and often vehement, counterattack. Bury the rumor. Bury the critic. Case closed.

And, we tend to admire those who are skillful at counterattack. We praise them as people who can “stand up” for themselves, and sometimes also for other people, and “set the record straight.” In addition, you don’t tend to mess with people who can take care of themselves this way.

Our experience of living in the world makes it difficult for us at first to hear today’s Proverb: **“Fools show their anger at once, but the prudent ignore an insult”** (Prov. 12:16). The central difference between the prudent and the fool, in this passage, is the rapidity with which one responds to an insult. What one might call the “natural” way to respond, with immediate, angry and intense counterattack, is characterized as the way of a fool. Instead, the wise or prudent person is one who doesn’t just “wait until tomorrow” to respond but is able even to ignore the insult or take the hit.

Proverbs takes this unconventional (is it unrealistic?) approach to responding to provocation for two reasons. On the one hand, Proverbs believes that God is there, and responding to provocation actually falls under God’s job description rather than ours. On the other hand, Proverbs feels that soft, rather than harsh words, get you further in life. There is no easy answer to the problem, but Proverbs should make us cautious about the hasty and heated response.