

The Power of the “word”

Most of us have heard the phrase “sticks and stones may break my bones but words may never hurt me”. Now that may be true for those who have a strong mental disposition but it’s not necessarily true to the majority who are somewhere in the middle between being over sensitive and having no sensitivity at all. That is if we’ll admit it. Words when formed into sentences, paragraphs, letters or in conversations, can become very powerful, negatively or positively, depending on how they are used of course. Words have caused wars by tyrants that were ended with words of diplomacy. And sometimes making the same statement in two different situations can bring about two different responses. Like we wouldn’t tell a two year old girl “my how big you’ve gotten” and repeat that to an adult woman, would we. Context then demands that our “speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt” (*Col 4:6*). Therefore, the gist of this lesson is meant to give insight and encouragement, not only to protect our reputations as Christians, or to help us guard against saying things that could be taken as un-Christ-like when in conversations with others, but ultimately, to bring glory to our Father in Heaven. Because what we say reflects on God and His people.

Being Aware of Our Surroundings

The most masterful speaker that ever walked the face of the earth had to have been Jesus. Everything He said was laced with truth and the way He said it captured the attention of all who heard Him. Especially when speaking to the ruling class of His day.

Mat 15:7 You hypocrites (*speaking to the Pharisees and scribes*)! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: **8** "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; **9** in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." **10** And He called the people to Him and said to them, "Hear and understand: **11** it is not what goes **into** the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes **out** of the mouth; **this** defiles a person."

- It’s not what we **eat** that defiles us (*which is not to say just eat or drink anything we want*) so much as what we **say** that’ll taint us. Of course, by **His** statement, **Jesus** may have frightened **His** immediate followers who were afraid of those pompous individuals **He** was referring to when **He** called certain of them hypocrites.

Mat 15:12 Then the disciples came and said to **Him**, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

- We can never allow a person’s status to intimidate us into not speaking or behaving in a **Godly** manner. Especially when it comes to saying what **needs** to be said with reference to the truth. Most of us have also heard the saying “if the shoe fits, wear it”, like when the prince in the **Grimm** fairy tale approached **Cinderella** to size the glass slipper on her foot. And obviously, there are times when **we** may need to hear something personally negative about us in order to get **us** to realize a certain destructive way we might be heading. If we’re told out of love we **should** listen and not be offended by someone who really cares about us. **Jesus** was aware when **He** may have offended **His** listeners at times, but why were they offended? Did **He** not love everyone (*rhetorically speaking of course*)? Was it not their own guilt they were experiencing that was gnawing at their consciences? And there’s another point to being aware of the feelings of others. We can’t always be responsible for saying something in a **constructive** manner that might hurt a person listening in on a personal conversation with someone else with whom we

are directly speaking. Which is why we should **always** be aware of our surroundings. So do we then need to whisper? But wouldn't that look even more suspicious, as though we are gossiping...

1Th 5:22 Abstain from every form (*Gk.1491- a view: -appearance*) of evil.

...especially when it comes to having a conversation over a sin we know a brother or sister has committed, without going to them in person? What did **Jesus** say on this?

Mat 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and **tell him his fault**, between you and him **alone**. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

- Again, if it isn't done out of love it has no possibility of being pleasing to **God** and all our efforts will have been done in vain.

Lev 19:17 "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall **reason frankly** with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall **not** take vengeance **or** bear a grudge against the sons of your own people (*in this case a fellow Christian?*), but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: **I am the LORD.**

- To "reason frankly" is to **not** 'beat around the bush', say what's on our mind and be truthful; but **do** so out of love and concern for the one we're trying to reason with. Anyone who doesn't appreciate constructive reproach wants nothing to do with their own personal growth. Of course there's another saying: "if you can't say something good about someone don't say anything at all". And there are those who seem to have mastered this saying but **is** it to be a true saying that we as **Christians** should follow? It **would** be if we've made a habit of talking about others behind their backs with an unloving disregard for their souls. And we should never say something negative about someone if we don't have the courage to say it to their face, but in a way that shows concern for their well-being. I've said something similar where if a person has something negative to say about me behind **my** back they're talking **to** my back and **not** to me. But if they're saying it to my **face**, then they're talking to me and at that point I need to listen. Other than that, how can I ever improve concerning the subject of their displeasure, unless it's not their intention that I make such an improvement in the first place?

Words that hurt.

Often times there are things we may have said that have hurt others unawares. And unless they come and explain **what** we've said and **how** it hurt them, we might never improve on our speech, if in fact it was a hurtful saying to begin with. Again, everyone has their own level of sensitivity when it comes to what another might say. Obviously, we should never take things personally **unless** it was meant to be that way and we need to make sure if it was meant to be the way we took it before reacting like a hurt puppy about it. But there are times we say the opposite of what we might actually mean in order to get a reaction from the person we're addressing. For instance: a child may say "I hate you!" when what they really want to say is "I love you and need you to understand the pain I'm feeling right now". How we receive such comments made out of frustration shows the level of our own personal wisdom in such matters. And we all know where true wisdom comes from.

Pro 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of His saints.

- Each of our own mental states can be measured by the level of wisdom we've obtained from our own personal relationships with the word of God. The more we're familiar with it the better our ability to thwart the darts, i.e. hurtful words, that are meant to get our attention. God's word teaches us the understanding necessary to...

Pro 2:12 deliver [us] from the way of evil, from men of **perverted speech**, 13 who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, 14 who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, 15 men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.

- "Men of perverted speech" are those who speak fraudulently and are known as children of the devil as Jesus stated in Jn 8:44.

Joh 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- When we think of words that hurt there can be none that are more devastating than those that, when put together, form a lie. It was with words craftily assembled that Satan was able to bring about mortality to the very pure Adam and Eve, which is why Jesus referred to him as being the first murderer. His words concerning the fruit "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2:17) convinced Eve that God was holding something back from them that would make them equal with Him. Thus the deadly sin of pride (1 Jn 2:16) was first committed, when "she took of the fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband who was with her, and he ate." (Gen 3:6) We understand that "the devil who deceived them" (Rev 20:10) and "all liars" will find that "their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev 21:8). Lying is listed among the sins that Paul wrote Timothy about (1 Tim 1:10) with regard to them being made by those who are "lawless and disobedient" (v. 9). Passage after passage show how lying in any form, whether a "little white" one or a big terrible one, shows the rebellious nature of a lawless and disobedient sinner. And Christians are not sinners, we don't give ourselves over to a life of sinful behavior as a sinner is known to do and we, as stated before, "abstain from every form of evil" (1 The 5:22). Not that we don't sin either, we just aren't to make a practice of sinning.

1Jn 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. 2 He is the propitiation (Gk.2434- atonement) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

- Remember, sin isn't always in what we do so much as it is in what we say. It's probably easier to sin verbally than it is to sin through action. And verbal sins come in many levels or categories. But whatever category, they display outwardly to whom our allegiance belongs. Remember...

1Jn 3:8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the **Son of God** appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of **God** makes a practice of sinning, for **God's** seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of **God**.

- *(Jesus taught Nicodemus how to be born of God in Jn 3.)* Truly faithful saints don't want anything to do with sin, we don't make a practice of sinning and we stay away from things that might cause us to forget who we are and to **Whom** we belong. If "**the seed is the word of God**" *(as Jesus said it is in Lk 8:11)* and it remains in us it will cause our **Godly** nature to avoid any and all temptations to sin. It is our human nature, that we often give in to, that leads us away from the word of **God** and toward the desire to sin.

Jas 1:15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

- Even our speech can lead us to death, which is a separation from **God** and **His** holiness. And vulgarity is one verbal sin that many have found difficult to leave behind. Taking the **Lord's** name in vain isn't always just cussing and defaming **His** precious name without regard to consequence, although it truly is a sin. Taking **His** name in vain **can** be when a **Christian** is found doing something un-**Christ**-like. To wear that **Holy Name**, according to Acts 11:26, is to represent **Christ** "and whatever [we] do, in word or deed, [we're to] do **everything** *(which includes watching what we say)* in the name of the **Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to **God the Father** through **Him**" *(Col 3:17)*. How can we give thanks to **God** while wearing the name of **Christian** when we're involved in some sin, whether in thought or deed? Especially while sinning verbally since doing such, by nature, is easier to do and harder to quit. Therefore, we need to truly practice...

Verbal Etiquette

How often have we used the phrase "what's the magic word" when told by a child that they want something? Of course if they don't even know the magic word how can they be expected to understand the etiquette of being polite when asking for anything? That magic word is 'please'. Thus the power of politeness. The saying "practice makes perfect" could be attributed to such words of etiquette. They should be employed often enough to become second nature. And every Christian should automatically understand such politeness since doing the opposite would be considered rude. Remember, children emulate adults, and Christians should demonstrate better examples when it comes to politeness in speech. Do we ever say 'please' or 'thank you' when in any situation where we are either asking for or receiving something from a bank teller or pharmacist or family member, friend or coworker? It shouldn't matter that a merchant might be profiting from our business, it's just plain good etiquette to employ such seasoned words as "you're welcome". Words that are "seasoned" *(Col 4:6)* are words that have been prepared. In other words, they are used often, which makes them second nature, and thought about even before speaking where those hearing will find them easier to receive. Notice how such was not practiced by Rehoboam when the children of Israel came to him with what they said concerning Solomon's reign...

2Ch 10:4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you." 5 He said to them, "Come to me again in three days." So the people went away. 6 Then **King Rehoboam** took counsel with the old men, who had stood before **Solomon** his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" 7 And they said to him, "If you will be good to this

people and please them and **speak good words** to them, **then** they will be your servants forever." 8 But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. 9 And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us'?" 10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us'; thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. 11 And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'"

...and the result.

2Ch 10:19 So **Israel** has been in rebellion against the house of **David** to this day.

- Again, words we speak almost always, depending on their tone, will cause a reaction by those we are speaking to. Especially with regard to...

Words of Comfort

We should never use the phrase “I know what you’re going through” even **if** we’ve been through something similar to what the person we are trying to comfort is presently experiencing. We don’t know the level of emotional pain another person is suffering because we may not truly understand their level of sensitivity. Each individual experiences emotional pain at their own personal level as if distinct as a fingerprint. All we can do is be a ‘sounding board’ and listen intently to their grieving words, focusing on **them** and not giving advice that may come off as “been there, done that”. Remember, it’s not always about us, it’s supposed to be about **them** when **they** are the ones in need. Our reassurances are what should get them through whatever they are going through. When they ask “why me?” that’s when we show them the love of God and the reason some sufferings are necessary in order to make us stronger. Because without life’s sorrows, who can truly understand the nature of God’s love toward His creation by sending Jesus to suffer in our stead? Notice how Job felt and how his friends tried to comfort him when he suffered the way he did.

Job 2:11 Now when **Job's** three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, **Eliphaz** the **Temanite**, **Bildad** the **Shuhite**, and **Zophar** the **Naamathite**. They **made an appointment** together to come **to show him sympathy** and comfort him. 12 And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. 13 And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and **no one spoke a word to him**, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

- Notice, “they made an appointment together” before going to **Job** “to show him sympathy”. It takes making an effort and a lot of focus when comforting someone who is either depressed or in mourning. And sometimes remaining quiet until that person speaks is the best way to comfort them. Just being there in most settings is enough to show we care. Especially when it concerns an adolescent child who has a propensity to rebel. Being silent at such times removes any such tendency and gives them mental space from having to stress over coming up with a verbal retort. Once we have their attention we need to use...

Words of Encouragement.

In the apostle Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica he used the word "encourage" when it came to the "fainthearted", those whose spirits needed lifted.

1Th 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

- The saying "what goes around comes around" can mean a lot when applied to words of encouragement. If we speak ill of someone we shouldn't be offended when others speak ill of us. But if we encourage others we can definitely expect to be encouraged when the time comes that we need it. When sending **Tychicus** (*whose name means 'fortunate'*) to the brethren at Ephesus and again to those of Colossae, **Paul's** purpose was for him to "encourage [their] hearts" (*Eph 6:22/Col 4:8*). He was to uplift their thoughts and feelings by telling them of **Paul's** activities as a way to encourage them in the faith. In return **Paul** was to receive encouragement from those churches, to continue spreading the gospel in whatever state he was in.

Eph 6:18 praying at all times in the **Spirit**, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, **19 and also for me, that** (*purpose for Paul being encouraged and prayed for*) words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. **21** So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, **Tychicus** the beloved brother and faithful minister in the **Lord** will tell you everything. **22** I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may **encourage your hearts**. **23** Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from **God** the **Father** and the **Lord Jesus Christ**. **24** Grace be with all who love our **Lord Jesus Christ** with love incorruptible.

- Our speech should always be fashioned in such a way that it pleases **God**, encourages the brethren and will deter all who speak ill from honestly saying anything negative about us. And we should always be speaking truth in love, no matter what. Even when we might lose a friend or family member because of it. **Paul**, when trying to reason with the **Galatians** for their desire to be "enslaved to those that by nature are not gods" (*Gal 4:7*) asked them a direct question after he admonished them.

Gal 4:16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

- Sometimes the truth hurts! Even when spoken in love. But it still needs to be spoken. Especially when it comes to the eternal souls of those who are lost. In that case we can talk the talk but if we don't walk the walk, we too can be found wanting.

1Jn 3:18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed (*Gk.2041- toil*) and in truth.

- According to **John**, love is something we need to work at. It should encompass everything we do, especially when it comes to our speech since words can either be hurtful or they can comfort and encourage, but must always be spoken in love. In that case...

#1. You've heard!

Romans 10:14 ..."how shall they believe in Him **Whom they have not heard?**"

#2. But do you believe?

Heb 11:6 ... "for he that commeth to God **must believe that He is...**"

#3. Have you repented?

Act 3:19 ... "**Repent** ... be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

#4. Have you acknowledged Christ as the Son of God?

Joh 14:6 **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.**

#5. If so, have you had your sins washed away in obedience to His word?

Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

#6. Once you've done all these things, you need to remain faithful.

Romans 6:4 "...we also should walk in newness of life."

#7. You need to resolve to keep growing.

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen.

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