



That they may teach the young women ...

The Law of Kindness

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Pr. 31:26

Hasn't it all been said, and written, and read about that evil little monster, the tongue? It is a fire, a world of iniquity, and defiles the whole body; it sets on fire the course of nature, is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison, and no man can tame it. These are some of the things James says about the tongue. Ja. 3:5-8 A Proverbs study of the capacities that our tongues have for good and evil teaches us that our concern with its use is twofold: using it wrongly and using it rightly. The godly woman of Proverbs is our model for the right use of the tongue, for her tongue is ruled by kindness.

Sins of the tongue

One of the greatest temptations to the misuse of the tongue among women is what we call gossip, and we need not try to call it anything else. To gossip is to pass on unverified stories about others (often concentrating on their faults and weaknesses and their consequences). It is an unwritten rule of the gossip game that we do not discuss any faults of others that we ourselves also have. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," says Proverbs 18:21, and in 11:9 we read that "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor." Gossip has destroyed reputations, as well as the emotional, mental, and even the physical health of its victims. Many have committed suicide in a state of mental and physical deterioration indirectly caused by unkind tongues.

Gossip is a habit. We should beware of "Christian" gossip, or sharing information about another under the

guise of asking for prayer. This is despicable, but it does happen. Very rarely need we reveal personal and private information about another, and never so if it has been told us in confidence. Sometimes we may not be specifically told that certain information is confidential, but we should be discerning enough to understand that it should not be repeated. If, when we share information with another, we have to ask that it not be repeated, in many cases we'd best not tell it at all, but redouble our praying about it.

Often we hear someone say (perhaps we say it ourselves), "Now I just love Sally to pieces, but ..." Then we know Sally is about to be cut to pieces. If we are going to say something unkind about someone, at least let's not be a hypocrite. Sometimes we don't really love Sally at all, and we are hiding hatred with lying lips. Pr. 10:18 To be a little more kind to ourselves, usually what we are really saying is, "Sally is a dear person, but she has many faults. However, I'm so charitable that I love her anyway." The next time we have an impulse to say, "I just love her, but ..." about someone, why not change "but" to "because" and tell why we love her, and let it go at that? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we spoke about the living persons the way we do about the ones who have just died—nothing but praise and kindness?

Picture a law at the gate of your mouth which says, "No unkind word shall pass these portals!" That is what is meant by, "In her tongue is the law of kindness." A law is something that must be obeyed. If it is broken, there are consequences—broken spirits (Proverbs 18:14), bro-

ken hearts (Proverbs 18:8), broken relationships (Proverbs 16:28; 17:9), and miserable feelings of guilt in the offender. If we truly fear God, we need have no shame as we talk with one another, knowing that He hears, for our speech will be gracious and kind and loving. Mal. 3:16

“I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress,” says the Psalmist. Ps. 17:3 We have discussed ways that our mouth can transgress by speaking unkindly. Is it a transgression to fail to speak a cheerful word to a discouraged person? Our failure to do so is usually a result of lack of thoughtfulness, or laziness, or no real interest in the welfare of others. And this lack is a result of what? It is painful to admit, but this lack is a pre-occupation with *our own* needs and desires, which keep us from noticing the needs of *others*.

Recently I had occasion to commend someone for a beautifully executed task, and I shall never forget the response. “My dear,” she said with tears in her voice, “I needed that encouragement!” With a convicted heart I thought of many Scripture passages that instruct us to lift up one another with kind words, and of how seldom I think to do it. “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.” Pr, 16:24

“Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.” Pr. 12:25 “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary ... He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” Is. 50:4 If we would have the tongue of the learned, we must learn something about those to whom we would minister. We must have our ears wakened. In other words, we need to talk less and listen more.

Kind ears

The natural companion of a kind tongue is a kind ear, and a person of true charm is first of all an expert listener. There is a vast difference between listening and simply keeping silent. A listener records, analyzes, and devises intelligent and interesting ways to respond to what he hears. To be a good listener one must have a genuine interest in others. A godly woman knows how to listen lovingly, patiently, and attentively, and her response will be thoughtful and concerned, demonstrating genuine interest. “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer.” Pr. 15:28 Many of us only “study” to say whatever we can about what interests

us most, and we listen by maintaining a polite silence until we can get the floor again to continue our me-myself-and-I monologue. Usually we are sadly unaware of the one-way nature of our communications.

It is important to distinguish between sincere praise and flattery, the determining difference being in the motive behind each. Flattery has a self-seeking goal, which is to ultimately work for the good of the one employing it, sometimes to the detriment of its object. Flattering praise is usually insincere and frequently exaggerated to the point of inaccuracy. The purpose of a true compliment

is to strengthen and encourage the one complimented. There is such a clean feeling in knowing that our praise of another flows from a sincere heart’s desire for that person’s good, and that our compliments are true and honest without a tinge of flattery.

We should remember when we are tempted to flatter someone that there is usually an ulterior motive lurking somewhere. It may be that we only want the other person’s approval of ourselves, but this is seeking to meet our own needs, not the other person’s. We should guard against trapping others or ourselves with flattery. Pr. 29:5 And we should be warned about those who entice and flatter us, and who tell us tales about others. They will probably amuse others with tales about us. Pr. 20:19

Remedies for the tongue

If we desire to have our tongues obey the law of kindness, God’s word has several suggestions as to how we might accomplish this. We should begin by asking God daily to prepare our hearts so that the answers or responses of our tongue would honor His name and do good to those we encounter throughout the day. Pr. 16:1 We should pray for a spirit of acceptance of others and their ways in order to avoid the temptation to be critical.

Enthusiasm is such good medicine for the soul! Nothing is more heartening than a hearty endorsement of one’s ideas. A friend of my mother-in-law said on the day of her funeral, “One thing I shall always remember about Dorothy is the enthusiastic way she responded to ideas. Her characteristic response was, ‘Yes, let’s!’” A congenial companion to enthusiasm is unqualified praise. A compliment with no “ifs,” “ands,” or “buts” is a rare jewel, and we should practice bestowing them more often.

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A word in time ...

A spirit sensitive to the needs or particular circumstances of others is so important. In other words, don't sing merry songs to a person with a breaking heart. Pr. 25:20 And although it is very commendable to count one's blessings, we should never do it in the company of a person who is obviously undergoing great trial or testing.

It is not easy to accept criticism or advice, but a true friend is willing to hurt us, if in the end we will be helped by that advice. It is only his faithfulness as a friend that causes him to inflict these necessary wounds. Pr. 28:23 Each of us has the possibility of two applications here. If we sense a necessity to administer such wounds, we must be sure that God has directed it and that our motives are pure. We must pray for a meek spirit, using Galatians 6:1 as our guide and authority. Or if a friend sees needs in our lives and attempts to help us by first having to hurt us, we shall have to ask for special grace and humility from God, for a teachable spirit, and for objectivity sufficient to see our faults. These situations are often victory grounds for Satan.

The royal law

Up to here we have only dealt with the superficial meaning of our text. Have you ever heard of The Royal Law of LOVE? Read James 2:8. The basic truth of this lesson is that the law of kindness cannot be present in the tongue unless the law of love exists in the heart. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good ... for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." (Lu. 6:45) Whatever is in our heart will determine what will come out of our mouth.

Love is the watershed of life—everything falls on one side of it or the other. Either a person possesses love—the capacity to love—or he doesn't. And he either has the world's flimsy facsimile, or he has the shining pure gold of God's love, working for, and in, and through him. We are speaking here of divine love, as it has redeemed the souls of those who will receive it, and as it flows freely through them, warming and blessing the lives of those around the redeemed ones.

God's love

Love is too deep and broad and complex a subject to try to confine to a few pages or brief minutes of study. But we

should recognize that love is the essence of God, and that it is His will that it should be manifested in the lives of His children. The common denominator of all expressions of love is sacrifice. The prototype of this is God's gracious expression of love for us in the sacrificial incarnation and death of Christ. Every manifestation of real love involves giving, or the giving up of something. Loving others doesn't merely mean to put up with them, to refrain from criticizing them, or doing them any harm. "She will do him good, and not evil" teaches us that we must attempt to do those things that would be good for and helpful and pleasing to those we love. Often this means giving up something, or some of ourselves—of our energy, our time, or material resources.

Love's loved ones

Sometimes we think that in the area of love our greatest difficulty is in loving the unlovely, or those people we don't particularly even like. This is a problem. But many of us don't love those nearest and dearest to us as we should. This lack shows itself in two ways. First, we don't truly love them deeply and unselfishly and with hearts full of gratitude to God for them. Second, we tend to take for granted the quality and quantity of the love we do have, and assume that they do also, so we rarely express it. What should we do about this? If we recognize that this is true in our lives, we should confess it to God. Next, we can begin to ask Him daily to strengthen and increase our love for our husbands, children, parents, and others close to us, thanking Him for them. And then we can ask Him to help us discover fresh, creative ways to show our love.

Love must also be learned. It is easy to love some people—they are so winsome and gracious that we can't help loving them. But in the case of others, it is a strain. We recognize the need for an exercise of grace, and exercise is a good word, for it is something like work. If you believe there is a lack of real love for others in your life, why not try this:

1. Recognize that love is not an emotion; it is an act of will.
2. Recognize that love is not optional for the Christian. Christ commanded it. Read John 15:12, Mat-

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thew 22:39 and Matthew 5:44 and list three categories of people we are required to love. Now list any categories this leaves out. (Clue: there are none.)

3. Pray, specifically and generally, for love, God's love, to pour through you to others. Name those whom you do not love, confess this as sin, and ask God to

enable you to love them, to see and appreciate their good qualities; to be gracious to their faults. Name those whom you do love. Ask God to enable you to love them more; to find new and creative ways to express this love. (Note: there are very few wives who love and appreciate their husbands as they should.) Expect God to answer this prayer because He commanded it; therefore you know

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it is His will. He has promised to supply those things that we ask in His will. 1 Jn. 5:14-15

4. Act. Do loving, thoughtful things for others. Express appreciation and admiration for them. Tell them you love them. You will be surprised to discover within yourself a little floweret of love where you thought none could grow.

No man can tame the tongue. But the Holy Spirit of God can, and only He can. Every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him,¹ and the fruit of the Spirit is love. But this love must be nurtured and cultivated and allowed to grow into something strong and useful and beautiful, as we surrender ourselves day by day, moment by moment, to the control of the Holy Spirit.

Practical applications

Read Proverbs 10:11-21, 31-32. What do these passages have to say about the mouth, lips, and tongue of the righteous or wise man? What do they say about the mouth or lips of the foolish man? ~*Unknown author*

This article was submitted to *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*, and due to a lack of proper filing, the name of the author is not known nor even who submitted it. If proper attribution is desired, please let us know and we will give proper acknowledgement in a future issue.

¹ Note that the Spirit dwells in every believer, but that does not mean that the Spirit dwells in every person who *thinks* he is a believer. Some people profess faith and then deduce that they are now filled with the Spirit because the Bible says that all believers have the Spirit ... when in fact their "faith" is void and they are in reality devoid of the Holy Ghost.