

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



Dave Phillips, editor

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"Seasoned with Salt"

Dave Phillips, Germantown

Which comes first, thought or action? In most instances, we would like to think that all of our actions are the result of deliberate and careful thought and reflection. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Instead of consistently thinking about an action before we take it, we frequently rush in and haphazardly act (or react) in such a way that brings us subsequent remorse and regret. Later, we end up apologizing to those we have hurt or correcting a mistake that we have made.

It isn't difficult to imagine the situation. A co-worker offends me by a harsh or critical remark. A teammate fails to learn the play and fulfill his/her responsibility. A contractor fails to meet the demands of the agreement. A brother in Christ lets you down. The church doesn't seem to understand or empathize with the situation in which you find yourself. It would be so tempting to lash out in a barrage of derogatory remarks that would be so appropriate in "setting the record straight." We would be able to "clear our name" and let others know that we were so mistreated. So tempting. Yet perhaps, upon further reflection, so inappropriate.

Paul writes to the Christians at Ephesus and addresses this very temptation. He says:

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:26-29, NASV)

Paul gives these three checkpoints for us to consider before we speak. Our speech is to be good for edification (does it build others up?), should be right for the moment (is it necessary and appropriate?), and should minister to the hearer (does it serve their needs?). These precautionary questions would help me avoid many comments and save making numerous apologies if I would just apply it.

Is anyone perfect? No. The apostle John says that the man that says he is without sin is not telling the truth (1 John 1:8). James also states that "no one can tame the tongue" (James 3:8).

Do I give up and give in? Hardly. Paul writes to the Colossians regarding their manner of life and charges them to "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt. So that you may know how should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6, NASV). Seasoning our speech is similar to seasoning our food. We try a different approach until we find what seems to work best. But unless we reflect on the impact of our words, we will be guilty of making the same mistake again. Thinking before we speak will help us say the right thing. Thinking before we speak may help us avoid saying the wrong thing. Carl Sandburg, the American poet and author, was speaking of Abraham Lincoln when he said, "Often with nothing to say, he said nothing." Seasoned to perfection.

Church Growth

Excerpts from Balance:

A Tried and Tested Formula for Church Growth

Ira North, Gospel Advocate, 1989 (pages 9,11,12)

After 40 years in the ministry, hearing lectures on church growth, reading books, magazine articles, visiting active churches and having been the minister of a congregation that came from a little basement congregation to the largest in the world among the churches of Christ, I have come to the

conclusion that there is a key word in church growth if it is solid, stable and lasting. That key word is *balance*.

Balance is so significant that when the New Testament tells us about the model church - the first church of Christ, established A.D. 33 in the city of Jerusalem - we have a beautiful picture of symmetry and balance. The Jerusalem church was not a cake half turned. It was not a one phase congregation with one program to the neglect of all others. It had three things, yea four, that gave it a harmonious and beautiful balance. It is these things so beautifully seen in the New Testament church that we plead for in this book, and that we believe is essential to build a growing church that is not a fly by night or a splash in the pan, but will be here solid and sound year after year, decade after decade.

The church in Jerusalem had a great teaching program. They not only taught on the Lord's Day, but day to day, continuing steadfastly in the apostles' teaching. Secondly, they had a great program of evangelism and mission work. They practiced the Great Commission of going, not only across town and across the nation and across the world, but also across the street. The going church is indeed the growing church, and the mission of the church is to preach the Gospel. Thirdly, the church in Jerusalem had a great benevolent program. In fact, it took seven men full of faith and the Holy Spirit to administer this program. And lastly, it had all these things - a great teaching program, a great benevolent program, and a great mission program in the framework of the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. This congregation, composed of thousands, was so dedicated to the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace that the scriptures say it had "one heart and one mind."

Lessons from an Usher

Author unknown (or unwilling to be known)

A missionary, speaking of the need on the foreign fields, was to receive an offering to help out with the work. A man was sitting next to the aisle about halfway up. He had folded his arms and sat with a grim look, a scowl and a frown. He evidently didn't want to be there. Perhaps his wife had made him come. When the usher held the plate in front of him, he just shook his head. The usher jiggled the plate invitingly. Still the only response was the head shake. The usher leaned over and whispered, "It's for missions, you know." Still the scowl and a mumbled sentence, "I don't believe in 'em." This usher was a sharp man. He leaned down and said, "Then you take some out. It's for the heathen, anyway."

A Personal Touch

Marlin Connelly, Nashville

On December 12, 1971, *Chicago Today*, the magazine section of the *Chicago American* newspaper, carried an article called "How to Write a Good Want Ad." To illustrate the importance of the personal touch the authors told of a real estate ad in which the seller, a New Jersey housewife, wrote her own copy. For three months an agent had tried to sell the house with a routine pitch. Finally, the housewife composed her own advertisement in which she poured out her personal feelings.

We'll miss our house, but two bedrooms are not enough for us. If you like to be cozy by a fire while you admire autumn woods through wide windows protected from the street; if you like a shady yard...quiet enough to hear the frogs...but want city utilities, you might like our house. We hope so. We don't want it empty at Christmas.

The house sold in 24 hours! If the personal touch is important in sales, it is essential in soul-winning. Each can one friend or relative, for whom you will pray daily, and whom you will try to bring to Christ this year.

"My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins." James 5:19-20