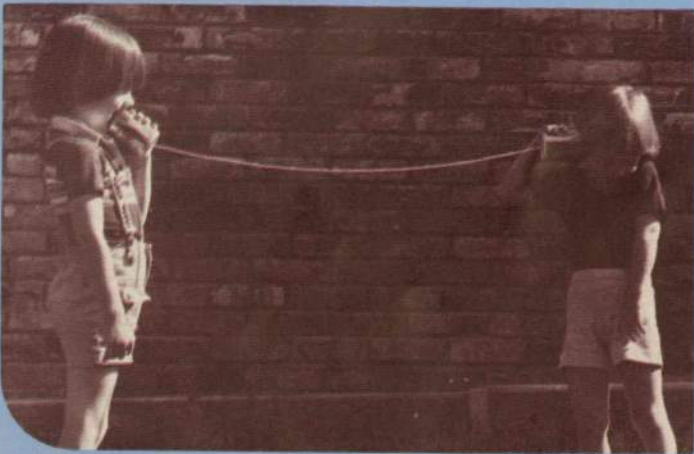


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JULY/AUGUST 1979

Improving Your Communication



Clear Communication

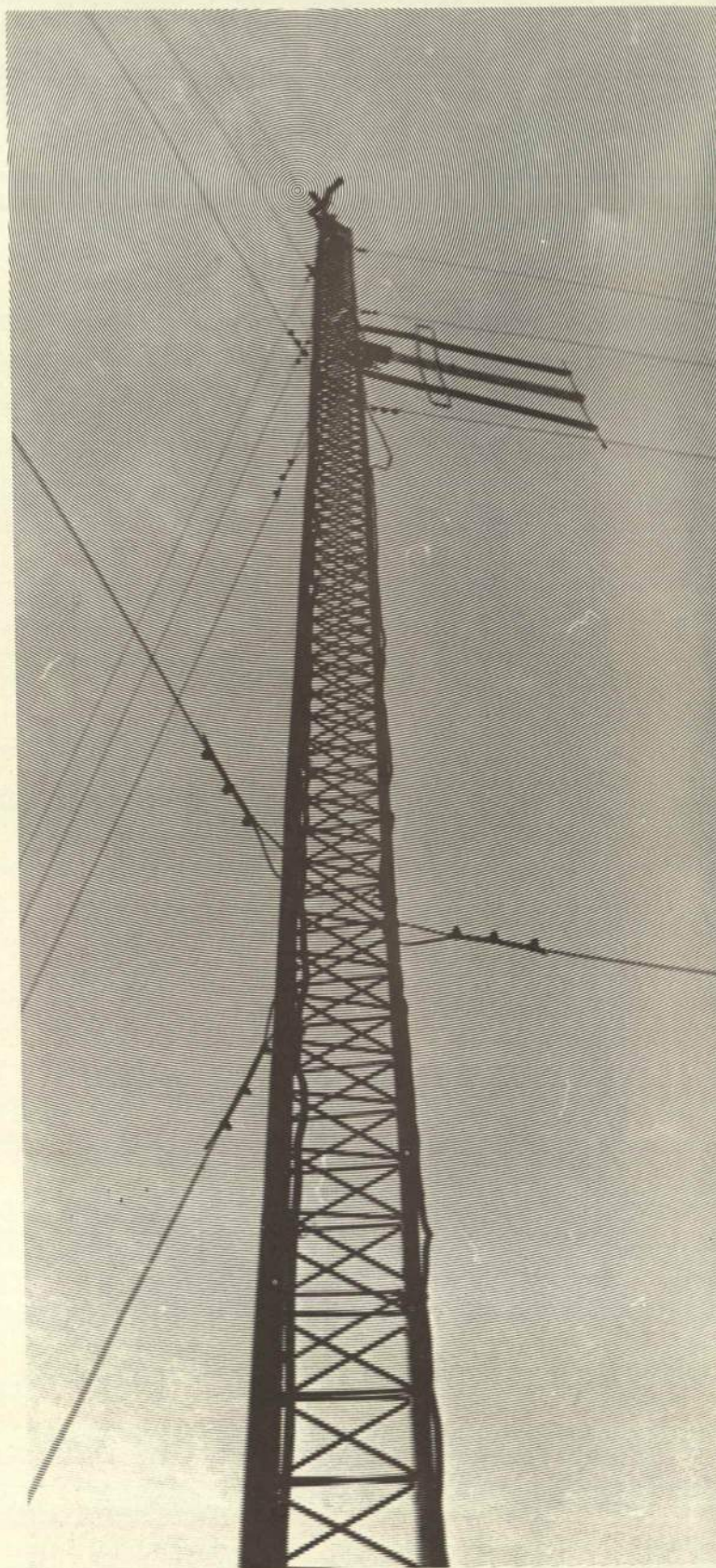
by John Stanko

GOD'S BASIC DESIRE is to communicate with mankind, particularly with those who are His. Through the Scriptures, through His own spoken word, and through brothers and sisters in the Lord, God reveals His mind and will to the Church. However, in this age of highly technological media bombardment and of intense competition for the attention of men, Christians face a formidable, yet crucial task, both of hearing what God says and effectively communicating it to one another and to the world.

The problem of communication isn't a new one for God's people. Throughout history, they have had problems hearing what God says and then acting upon it. Isaiah saw the failure of the religious people of his day to understand and accept the word God was speaking through His prophets (Is. 6:9-10). Even when they heard, Isaiah saw them only give lip service to God while withholding their hearts from the realm of obedience (Is. 29:13). When God imparted the Law to Moses, He spoke expecting Moses to accurately communicate what he heard to God's people, who, in turn, were to *hear* and *do* what He said. Moses did his part, but again the people turned away from obedience.

The Church faces the same problem in distinguishing God's voice that the nation of Israel faced during Jesus' earthly ministry. When God the Father spoke audibly to Jesus (Jn. 12:28-29), some thought it to be a thunderclap, while others mistook it for an angel speaking! Jesus, however, having trained His ear to know and obey the Father's voice, recognized it for what it was. God expects no less from the Church today.

Continued on page 4.



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The editorial policy and purpose of *New Wine Magazine* is: (1) to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations, (2) to work with all Christian ministries for the maturity and unity of His Church, (3) thus making ready a people prepared for the coming of the Lord.

We recognize that, according to the Scriptures, God uses men given as ministries to build His Church in the earth. However, the basis of our relationship is not primarily commitment to human personalities, but to Jesus Christ as Head, to the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate standard by which all revelation and practice is to be judged and to God's purpose for His people in the earth at this time, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit.

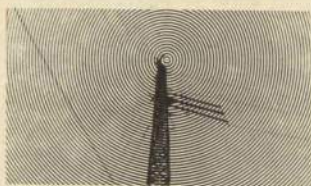
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LISTENING TO ONE ANOTHER

Much of our communication with God is intricately tied to our communication with one another. The principle embodied in 1 Corinthians 15:46—of the natural coming first and *then* the spiritual—applies well to this matter. As our diligence in listening and speaking to one another increases, we will find that God is using our natural communication to train us to hear His voice and to be His mouthpiece.

God has used men throughout history to communicate His desires, often with limited success. Israel was taken into exile because its leaders refused to speak what God wanted and because its people neglected the word of His true servants. Nevertheless, today God continues to rely upon men to communicate His word, both through the specific offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher and pastor in His Body, and on a larger scale, through each member of the Body as we teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16) and encourage one another as the day draws near (Heb. 10:22). Through both means, God is communicating with the Church, and He is relying upon the faithfulness of both the listener and speaker.

TWO BASIC ELEMENTS

There are two basic elements involved in effective, Kingdom communication. The first is *accuracy of speech*. This entails discretion and integrity on the part of the speaker. Matthew 12:36-37 says:

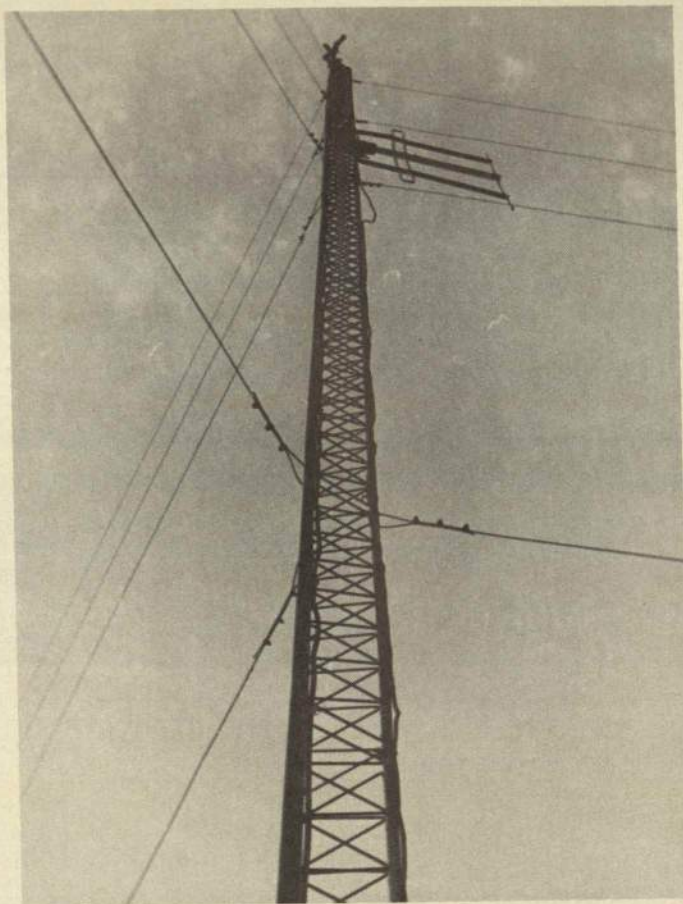
And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.

For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

The second element, and perhaps the most important, is a *listening ear*. Much more than a passive ac-



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ceptance of what God commands, a "listening ear" represents an overriding desire to comprehend and carry out what is being communicated. When we receive a spoken word, we can fall into one of three categories. The first is to hear and do precisely what is spoken. The second is to hear it, comprehend it, yet fail to act on it. The third is to hear, but fail to comprehend what is spoken and mistakenly carry out what we *think* we heard. Nothing is as frustrating to God or His servants as someone who falls into these last two categories.

An excellent example of how we are to receive the word of God is given in the lives of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Apostle John. Each man actually *ate* the word of God when he received it (Jer. 15:16, Ez. 3:3, Rev. 10:10). Each of them made the word of God a part of his very being, and that commitment to the word shaped their lives and the lives of the people around them.

Jesus further stressed the need for commitment to act upon what is spoken when He said, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (Jn. 7:17, NAS). Before we can hear from God, we must set our minds on doing whatever He says.

SEVEN COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

Most communication problems, both in hearing and doing what God says, and in communicating with one another, can be traced to seven areas:

1) *Hardness of Heart*. Psalm 95:7-8 says, “. . . Today, if you would *hear His voice*, Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness.” We find Israel at Meribah in Exodus 17:1-7 without any fresh water to drink. One would not expect that the children of Israel, after seeing the Lord part the Red Sea and provide quail and manna for them to eat, would challenge the faithfulness of God’s promise to meet their needs. But they did. In verse 7 they lamented, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” How quickly they had forgotten! Through their stubbornness and shortsightedness, they missed the fact that God was testing them in order to manifest His power, and failed to respond to Him. Instead they hardened their hearts and eventually perished in the wilderness, unable to ever respond effectively to God’s voice.

2) *Wrong Assumptions*. Naaman, the great captain of the Syrian army, spoken of in 2 Kings 5:1-14, was a leper who went to seek healing from Elisha, the prophet of Israel. When Naaman arrived at Elisha’s house, the prophet simply sent a message out to him on how he was to receive his healing. This made Naaman furious, and he said in verse 11, “*I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord His God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.’*”

Naaman assumed that Elisha would act a certain way and say certain words. When that didn’t happen, he almost rejected his one chance for healing. An assumption in our minds will put us on one track, and if we’re not prepared for God, our pastor, our husband or our wife to respond differently than we assumed, there’s a good chance we’ll miss what we need to hear and do.

3) *Loss of the Fear of God*. Exodus 20:20 states: “And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that *the fear of Him may remain with you*, so that you may not sin.’” Consider Moses after God tried to kill him for not circumcising his son. Do you think he was careful to both listen and speak accurately after that incident? A knowledge that God will punish lazy ears and an undisciplined tongue should be the ultimate stimulus to effective communication.

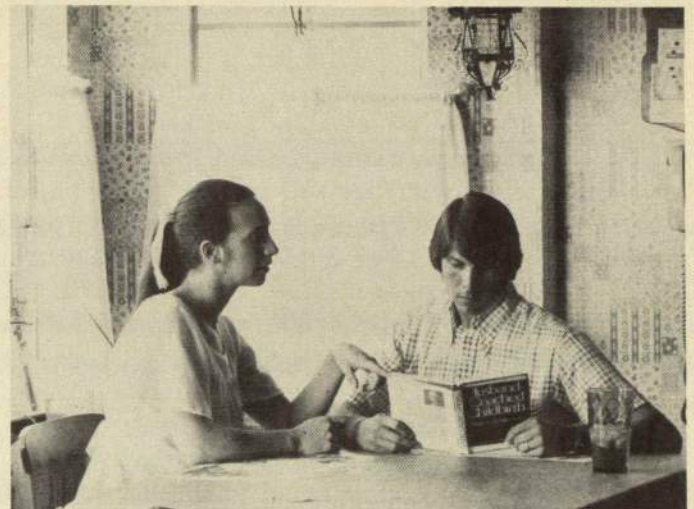
4) *Spiritual Impurities*. No matter how much we try to suppress it, we will communicate hatred if

we’re hateful, cynicism if we’re cynical, and perversion if we’re perverted. Jesus said, “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man” (Mt. 15:18). We communicate what we *are*, not what we *know*. We need to examine our hearts and weed out those things which will be passed on through communication.

5) *Lack of Discipline*. James 1:19 says, “. . . let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.” Unfortunately, most of us are the opposite—quick to speak, quick to get angry, but slow to hear. It takes work to control our mouths and to listen as good stewards of what we are hearing, especially if what we are hearing is something we’ve heard before. The Phillips translation of Mark 4:24-25 says it well:

“*Pay attention to what you hear,*” he said to them. “Whatever measure you use will be used towards you, and even more than that. For the man who has something will receive more. As for the man who has nothing, even his nothing will be taken away.”

With this in mind, listening should be seen as an investment of our time and energy. If we listen well and obey, God will increase our capacity to hear and obey. If we do not train ourselves to be quick to hear, we will lose whatever we have heard.



6) *Fear*. Although Jesus warned the disciples about His death and resurrection, they never comprehended what was being said; and yet they did not question Him further, as had been their custom, because they were *afraid* (Mk. 9:31-32). Fear of making a mistake, fear of man, or fear of the personal implications of obedience can prevent us from even wanting to know what is being said to us in a particular situation.

7) *Spiritual Warfare*. In times of war, each side makes a concerted effort to disrupt the other side's communication. Radio channels are jammed and false reports are broadcast in an effort to confuse and delay the opposition. We can be sure that Satan is at work to distort God's communication with us and our communication with one another. In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:19, Satan is the one who steals the word of the Kingdom from the person who doesn't understand it, and he is also the one who speaks through Peter to try to dissuade Jesus from fulfilling His commission from the Father to die for all men (Mt. 16:22-23).

STEPS TOWARD BETTER COMMUNICATION

If we have a problem in communicating, there is a chance it may continue unnoticed. If someone is not a trained listener, any exhortation to improve may not even be heard! Since it's easy to assume that you are a good communicator, yet not be, it is important

*Before we can hear from God,
we must set our minds
on doing whatever He says.*

that each of us take certain steps to insure that we are being effective listeners and speakers.

1) *Realize that communication requires work*. All of us need to work hard in this area. Ask your pastor whether or not you speak clearly. Ask if you have carried out what has been spoken to you. Make sure that you involve yourself with people who will tell you if you're not speaking clearly or hearing with a listening ear.

2) *Isolate problem areas*. If by Sunday afternoon you can't remember what was said in the Sunday morning sermon, recognize that you have a problem. Realize that it may be an indication, beyond your inability to listen, of a spiritual condition which needs correction. Confess this to God and one another, seek prayer and guidance, and search the Scriptures. Ask God to show you scriptural remedies for your communicative deficiencies. The book of Proverbs is full of tips on good communication and can help you speak and listen more effectively.

3) *Seek assistance*. As we recognize and correct our problems with the help of a pastor or shepherd,

the principle in Isaiah 32:1-4 will begin to prevail:

Behold, a king will reign righteously,
And princes will rule justly.
And each will be like a refuge from the wind,
And a shelter from the storm,
Like streams of water in a dry country,
Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.
Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,
And the ears of those who hear will listen.
And the mind of the hasty will discern the truth,
And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.

These verses show clearly that one of the keys to improved communication is the emergence of God's government in the Church! Under the oversight of righteous and just leaders, communication and understanding will be of the highest calibre. Even those with a problem of "stammering" or a "hasty mind" will come into a new measure of success.

4) *Move from being a command-oriented to a suggestion-oriented servant*. The epistle to Philemon contains an enlightening principle. Paul says, "Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love . . . But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be *spontaneous and not forced*" (vss. 8-9 & 14, NIV). Just as Paul did not wish to force Philemon by ordering him, God prefers not having to force us to obey against our will. By hearing what is being *suggested* and then doing it, we operate on a level of obedience requiring careful listening and communication.

5) *Count on the grace of God*. As we strive to excel in communication, we must trust that God will do for us what is promised in Isaiah 50:4-5:

The Lord God has *given* Me the tongue of disciples,
That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.
He *awakens* Me morning by morning,
He *awakens* My ear to listen as a disciple.
The Lord *has opened* My ear;
And I was not disobedient,
Nor did I turn back.

May God, by His grace, open our ears to hear Him as never before and loose our tongues to bless the weary ones. Let us cooperate with His grace and excel still more in our communication with one another and with Him. ▼

“We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

James 3:3-13, 17-18.

Thy Word Is Truth

New Testament scriptures are from the New International Version, ©1973 by the New York Bible Society International.



Joab didn't feel what David felt when he said, "Be gentle with Absalom for my sake."

Hearing from the Heart

by Charles Simpson

MORE AND MORE, I'm coming to believe that the best word to describe the culture in which we live is the word "Babylon." By scriptural definition, Babylon means "confusion." However, it wasn't originally intended to be confusion. Babylon has been called one of the wonders of the world, with a man-made mountain in its huge walls, and the hanging gardens. The city was a fantastic expression of humanism—so much so that in Daniel's vision of the image in Daniel 2:31-38, he saw Babylon as the head of gold, the beginning and the apex of humanism. Babylon was a wonder, a magnificent city, surpassing even cities like Rome, Paris and New York in its planning, structure, and ability to sustain itself.

But Babylon came to be confusion. Today, it is only scattered stones where jackals dwell. The tower of Babel, built before Babylon the city, was the very epitome of confusion. It was where men started out in their own wisdom to reach the heavens and concluded with them unable to understand one another at all.

I believe we are living in a Babylon. Babylon the Great, spoken of by the Apostle John in the book of Revelation, is nothing more than noble human ef-

forts which have fallen into confusion, frustration and disintegration. Babylon or humanism is presently motivating politics, economics and religion. Human initiative, apart from God's sovereign purpose, will fail the same way the tower of Babel did. Confusion will lead to desolation and a habitation for foul spirits.

When "the Babylonian system falls," all the nations will weep over it and will suffer because they all depended on *it* rather than on the *Lord*. Bureaucracy is Babylonian wisdom. Babylon is collapsing in a sea of red tape which is increasing more and more.

Industrial, academic, political and religious inefficiency mount up as we become more and more incapable of communicating with one another. (I personally recommend William Simon's book, *A Time For Truth*. William Simon is former U.S. Secretary of Treasury and later the Government Energy Chief.) We have to say and do everything at least twice before we can accomplish our original purpose. Every effort must be supported by a battery of lawyers, laws and contracts are written in "legalese," a new language that has emerged in recent years.

A no-longer-humorous saying is "I know you think

Etching entitled "Absalom" by Marvin Hayes from *God's Images*, Copyright ©1977 by Oxmoor House, Inc., Birmingham, Alabama.

you understood what I said, but what you heard is not what I meant to say.”

In spite of all of our intellectual ability, we are losing the ability to talk to one another. With our advancing technological languages, a man who is in one field can't communicate with a man in another field because, beyond cliches and ordinary phrases, they speak different languages. There is a language of theology, a language of math, a language of science, a language of the humanities. The more refined we get in our own specialized field, the less we are able to communicate with each other.

Ultimately, *the evidence of our progress out of Babylon is clarity of speech*—the ability to say what we mean and make ourselves understood. We can tell how far we are from Babylon by how clear our communication becomes. If you are still on the outskirts of Babylon, you probably do a lot of double talking right now, saying one thing and meaning another. I want to say again, *the evidence of our progress out of Babylon is clarity of speech*. If Babylon is epitomized by confusion, the Kingdom of God is epitomized by clarity.

A DISCIPLINED SPIRIT

Jesus had the ability to say a lot in a few words. When God speaks, He speaks succinctly with words of substance. When He speaks, it's not mere words, but impartation of life. The Kingdom of God and the city of God will be ruled by “unbent words.” The Bible says, “He will rule with a rod of iron,” (Ps. 2:9). The word that goes out of His mouth will not be bent by those who hear it in the city of God. It will be given and received clearly, and acted upon immediately.

When our spirits are ruled by His Lordship, our words flow gently, clearly and effectively. All the subjects of the Kingdom of God will have disciplined spirits. Hebrews 12 tell us we are coming to a city where the spirits of men have been made perfect. It doesn't say, “perfect men,” but “men whose *spirits* have been made perfect.” God is perfecting or maturing our spirits and our attitudes. The result will be clarity of communication and effective action.

When Jesus rules our spirit, our emotions are under the control of our spirit and our communication finds its way across our tongue in gentleness and clarity. We haven't arrived at the Kingdom of God in communication, but hopefully we are on our way out of Babylon, coming out of confusion and making

our way toward clarity of speech.

JESUS, THE PATTERN

Jesus is the pattern disciple. Isaiah 50 is a prophetic word about Jesus which emphasizes His attitude toward communication:

The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me!

It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? (Is. 50:4-9, NIV).

The New American Standard Version says in verse 4, “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples.” This is a messianic passage: Isaiah is prophesying about the Lord Jesus. Jesus says to the Father in this eternal scene, “You have given Me a disciple's tongue; you've given Me a disciple's ear.”

There are seven qualities in this passage that reveal Jesus' discipleship to the Father. First, He had a tongue that sustained. Jesus' tongue brought forth life. It's interesting that the first thing is the tongue. You would think He would start with the heart or the mind, but as James says, “A man who learns to rule his tongue has got it all together.” Proverbs 10 says that the righteous tongue will bring forth life.

Second, Jesus had an ear that would receive instruction.

Third, he had a disciple's obedience. This scripture tells us that every morning Jesus listened for the Father's instruction. Once He heard the Lord's instruction, He obeyed what the Father said. That's clean and crisp—no “messing around”—He just did it.

Fourth, Jesus had the humility of a disciple. How do we know that? Scripture says that He offered His body to His enemy, His cheek to those who pulled out the beard, and His back to the smiters. Jesus was the One who said, “No man takes My life from Me; I lay it down of My own accord” (Jn. 10:17,18).

You understand what that means, don't you? It means Jesus exposed Himself to them. It's difficult to expose yourself to your enemies willingly. Yet Jesus did not run away. He showed Himself in Jerusalem. He told His disciples sarcastically, though truthfully, that it wasn't right for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem—and He went there willingly.

A disciple's obedience carries him into places where he isn't liked. This is difficult to hear because it is much easier for us to gather together where everyone loves one another. But we must be willing to expose ourselves in humility to our enemies. That is as much a part of discipleship as the love and fellowship. Jesus said to Peter, "When you get old, they'll carry you where you don't want to go." Allowing the Lord to carry us where we don't want to go is a part of discipleship. The attitude of a disciple is that he offers his body willingly to the enemies.

Fifth, He also received the strength of a disciple. Scripture says the Lord helped Him. The Lord will help you with whatever He tells you to do. You will find out the strength of God when you begin to obey Him. In adversity we discover the power and the strength of God. Jesus had the strength of a disciple.

Sixth, Jesus had the commitment of a disciple. The Scripture says, "He set His face like flint." When He set His face to Jerusalem, no demon in hell, nor distraction, nor flattery, nor any kind of emotion could make the needle on His compass wiggle. He set His face like flint, without a trace of double-mindedness or instability.

*It is easier to do what somebody
tells you than it is to
feel the way he feels about it.*

By our tendency to be noncommittal, we have developed the art of saying absolutely nothing with a multitude of words. But Jesus had committed himself—he set his face—verbally and physically.

Seventh and finally, Jesus had the vindication of a disciple. A disciple never vindicates himself. "He who vindicates me is near." Now if you know that to be true, you won't have to vindicate yourself. The Vindicator is the One who sent you, and if you obey Him, He will vindicate you.

Obedience will vindicate you. Jesus was vindicated by the Father because He rose out of the grave and sat down at the Father's right hand. Then the Holy Ghost was poured out on thousands of people. That was the Father's way of saying to the world, "I hereby vindicate My Son. You spat on Him, but I vindicate Him. You mocked Him, but I

vindicate Him. You killed Him, but I vindicate Him." If God wants to vindicate you, He'll put your foot on your enemy's head. He can do it. But don't vindicate yourself.

In these seven areas, Jesus demonstrated how a disciple is to speak and behave.

INSTRUCTION AND COMMUNICATION

With Jesus' example as background of how a disciple is to speak, listen and behave, I want us to examine an incident from David's life which is packed with insights on a disciple's instruction and communication. The situation is in 2 Samuel 18 and concerns the rebellion of Absalom, David's son.

David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. David sent the troops out—a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai, son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, "I myself will surely march out with you."

But the men said, "You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city."

The king answered, "I will do whatever seems best to you."

So the king stood beside the gate while all the men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands. The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.

The army marched into the field to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. There the army of Israel was defeated by David's men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword.

Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going, (vss. 1-9, NIV).

This was the situation. Mighty, courageous, faithful King David had sinned, and through sin his king-

dom had fallen into confusion and revolution. Problems began to erupt among his own sons and daughters—bad problems. Finally, his most cherished son, Absalom, who was a strong young man and a mighty warrior, rebelled and led a revolt against his father. It got so bad that David evacuated the capital with his troops rather than fight his own son. It was a time of great sorrow as the whole nation of Israel saw its glory besmirched and shamed.

In spite of all the darkness and the shame that was on David, he had a hope that God would spare his household and even that God would spare his son Absalom. As a confrontation between Absalom's troops and his own became imminent, David gave instructions to his three commanders in the presence of their troops. David's own spirit was broken. He was not the strong leader he had been a few years before. He was in deep depression at that moment, so full of guilt that he probably wished he were dead. He said to his commanders, "I'm going to go out with you to battle." That would have been the right thing to do, but his commanders dissuaded him. They said, "No, why don't you stay? After all, you are more important than we are, and they will try to kill you." And so he stayed.

THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE

I want to emphasize an important point here. Even though the logic of David's men was based on love and loyalty for him, it is obvious from their subsequent actions that their attitude was not the same as David's. What I want to stress is the difference between *loyalty* and having the *same attitude* as the one to whom you are loyal.

*Our challenge is not only to
feel the way God wants us to feel,
but also to communicate how
we feel to those around us.*

That difference is especially evident in their response to David's one instruction concerning Absalom: "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." David loved Absalom and he said, "Don't kill him. Be gentle *for my sake*." The key to that request is "*for my sake*."

What was he asking of his men? He wanted his men to *feel* the way he felt toward Absalom. It is easier to do what somebody tells you than it is to feel

the way he feels about it.

Receiving communication and instruction depends not only on doing what you're told, but on the ability to feel the same way about the instruction as the one feels who gives it. It's not enough really to obey God—God wants us to learn to feel about it the way He does.

What God is asking of us is deeper than mere obedience. He's asking us to receive an impartation of His Spirit, His attitude.

As I look at the account, it is obvious to me that Joab, one of David's three commanders, never got David's attitude. The *loyalty* of Joab, Ittai and Abishai, three of his mighty men, is beyond question. These were men who had walked with David in his shame. When Absalom had sought to beguile them from following David, they chose to go out of the city with David rather than stay in the city with Absalom. They were loyal men. Yet they never really had David's attitude.

One incident that reveals the difference in their attitude is in 2 Samuel 16. As King David and his troops were evacuating Jerusalem in utter embarrassment, a descendant of King Saul named Shimei ran out, and according to verse 6, "pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left. As he cursed, Shimei said, 'Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!' " (vss. 6-8, NIV).

Who was Shimei cursing? King David, one of the greatest men that ever lived—the progenitor of Jesus the Messiah. If Shimei had been throwing rocks and cursing just at David, it would have been bad enough, but walking beside David on one side was Abishai, the man that killed three hundred men on one occasion, and on the other side was Eleazar, a man who destroyed a score of Philistines just to preserve a field of barley. All David's mighty men were around him—big, mean brutes who could eat flesh without cooking it. And they were in the mood to kill. Their muscles were flexed; their veins were standing out. Their blood was like acid running through their bodies, and their gauges were all over in the red "danger zone," and here was this nut, throwing dirt and rocks and cursing at their captain.

Finally, Abishai said to David, "Let me go over to that dead dog and *lift* off his head." (His reference to Shimei as a "dead dog" seemed prophetic at that

point!) Now, you cannot say they weren't loyal, but you must say they didn't feel what David felt. For David says to them in verse 10: "What do you and I have in common?" What a shocking question this must have been to these men who had fought Saul's armies with David, taken Zion with him, covenanted with him at Hebron, and hidden in the cave with him when he was being hunted like a wild animal. To his question, "What do you and I have in common?" they must have replied, "We have everything in common." But David had to say, "No, there is something very basic that we do not have in common: We don't feel the same way about things."

It would really shake you for a man with whom you would walk through the fire to say to you, "What do you and I have in common?" Shimei was just a provocative influence that revealed the difference between their attitude and David's.

David said to them, "If my own son is trying to steal the kingdom, can you blame this Benjaminite for what he is doing. Don't get mad at him. Besides, if God sent him here to curse me, maybe if I behave properly, God will see it and bless me for taking this cursing."

David was dealing with the Lord. He knew he had sinned, and he understood what was happening to him. So he embraced it as the correction of the Lord. To me, it's very powerful that a man could feel about a situation the way he thought God felt about it. The tragedy was that he couldn't make the men around him feel as he did. Our challenge is not only to feel the way God wants *us* to feel, but also to *communicate how we feel to those around us*. David's men were loyal in many ways, but they didn't have the same attitude he did, a fact which became evident in the day of crisis.

" . . . FOR MY SAKE"

Unfortunately, this difference between their attitude and David's was manifested on the road out of town. When, with the battle imminent, David said to them, "Remember fellows, be gentle with Absalom for my sake," he was trying to impart his attitude, just as he had done in the matter with Shimei. If they had heard him concerning Shimei, they would have heard him that day concerning Absalom—for both times he was saying, "*For my sake*. Not how *you* feel, but how *I* feel."

Don't do something based on *your* feelings. Do it based on the one whom you serve. I can't serve Jesus properly when I consider the way I feel. God has to

help me feel the way Jesus feels because I'm not my own—I'm His servant. I represent *His* feelings. Now, I have my own set of feelings. I know how Abishai, and Ittai and Joab felt. But God doesn't entitle us to act on how *we* feel. He expects us to align ourselves with the attitude of the one whom we serve.

When the day of the battle came, David's troops massacred Absalom's troops, killing 20,000 of his men. In the retreat that followed, Absalom, in his naivety and silliness, was riding on his mule through a thicket, and his thick hair caught in the branches of an oak tree. His mule kept going and there hung handsome Absalom—absolutely vulnerable and defenseless.



When a young man saw him and reported Absalom's state to Joab, Joab said, "If you had killed him, I would have given you ten shekels and a warrior's belt." The young man replied, "I wouldn't kill him for thousands of shekels—he's the king's son! Didn't you hear what King David said?" Joab answered, "Get out of my way! I'm not waiting on you!" and he took three spears and plunged them into Absalom while he was hanging there. Then his men all followed suit and took their turn stabbing Absalom. Full of hatred and bitterness, they vented all of their own fury upon Absalom's body as he hung there. That combination of victory, vulnerability, and vengeance made it less than a joyful occasion. Victory was turned into mourning that day because everyone knew how the king would grieve over the death of his son.

When King David heard the news of Absalom's death, he was shaken. He retired to the room over the gateway and wept aloud: "Oh, my son Absalom. If only I had died instead of you. Oh Absalom, my son, my son."

Joab's reaction to the King's grief for Absalom punctuates the impropriety of his attitude toward David. Joab went into the house where king David was grieving for Absalom and he said, "Today you humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the Lord that if you don't go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come upon you from your youth till now (2 Sam. 19:5-7).

So in response to what Joab said, David arose and took his seat in the gateway so that all the men could come before him. The rest of the story is equally pathetic, but the main point is that Joab obviously never understood how David felt.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US?

What do these incidents have to do with where we are today as the people of God? To those of us who are walking in committed relationships, as David's men were desiring to do with him, God has called many of us to say to our pastors, "I believe God has drawn me to follow after you as a servant of the Lord and to follow the Lord." What God is now saying to us is, "It's tighten-up time."

When we ask ourselves why God has apprehended us and blessed us and brought us to this place, something very sobering will happen to us. We realize that God chose us for something bigger than what we can do. It's more than we can accomplish. The thing for which God has called us is beyond our present abilities and our present commitment, even as good as it is.

This is not to be critical of what has taken place thus far in our lives, but we must face the fact that we will have to be more efficient than we've ever been before.

It's tighten-up time. God is saying, "OK. You've been doing real well for the minor leagues, but I want to bring you up to the majors. I want to teach you how to say a thing *one time* and have it understood. I'm going to put you through a season of testing where nothing will come out the way you thought it was going to come out. Communication

will be a greater challenge. Things are going to go wrong: you will misunderstand things that are said to you. You will have to tighten your relationship with your husband or your wife. You may even have a few fights. You're going to struggle with inefficiency until your 'yea' will be 'yea' and your 'nay' will be 'nay.'

"Then you can do twice the work with half the effort. Right now you're doing half the work with twice the effort. You say everything twice and do everything twice, and it finally gets done. But you're a tired, nervous wreck.

"I'm going to teach you how to say it in peace, and it will be received in peace. You won't have to assert yourself to communicate, and those who follow your leadership will have your attitude. Then you will know you are leaving 'Babylon' and getting near to Zion."

We don't want a tower of Babel. But to avoid that, our communication with our brothers will be tested and their communication with us will be tested. God will put the fire to it and take the fog out of it.

This is not a rebuke—it's a challenge. It has suddenly dawned on me that God isn't calling us to do something *we* like. He is calling us to do something *He* likes. He's not calling us to build a nice little nest where we can shut out the outside world and enjoy ourselves. He's training us to rule and reign with Him in *His* Kingdom, not ours.

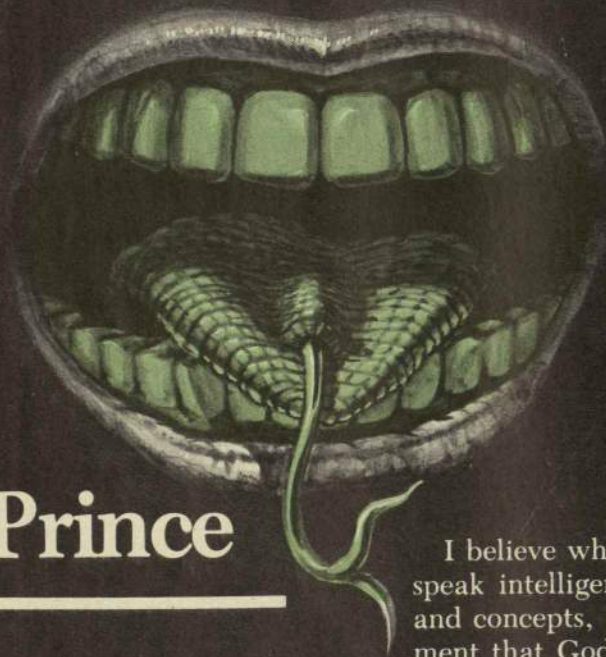
In His Kingdom there are many people we may not like, even a few people we could put the sword to if nobody was looking. But He is saying to us, "For My sake, be gentle with him. Don't hurt him." I don't want to see God weep over some Absalom that I released my feelings on. More than anything, I want victory day to be a day of joy, not of mourning.

God will test us. He will add to us. He will broaden and strengthen our foundations.

Ask Jesus Christ not only what He wants us to do, but to give us the capacity to feel about it the way He feels. Say to the Lord, "I want to hear what you're saying with a disciple's ear; I want to speak with a disciple's tongue and have a disciple's attitude of humility and obedience, without vengeance."

God wants a people to do His will. I pray He will never have to pass us by to find someone else. Not because we want a monopoly on the job, but because we want the Lord to be happy, to be pleased with us, and to say about us, "These are My people. They understand My ways. They feel about things just like I do." ▼

Use and Abuse of the Tongue



by Derek Prince

What comes out of your mouth is the indication of what is in your heart.

IN THE HUMAN HEAD there are seven natural openings. All of them come in pairs—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils—except for the last one: the mouth. I suppose no one would ask for two mouths. Most of us have enough problems with one.

If you were to go to Scripture and make a complete systematic study of what it says about the tongue, the lips, the mouth, words and speech, it would take you many hours. You can look at any reliable concordance under those headings and find pages of scripture references. In fact I doubt there is any single subject that occupies more space in Scripture than the use of our tongue and our mouth.

I believe when God gave man the ability to speak intelligently, consecutively in sentences and concepts, it was a validation of the statement that God made man in His own image.

When God committed to man the power to speak, He committed to him His own authority and creative ability, because it was by God's words that all creation was brought into being. As Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth," and Hebrews 11:3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the *word of God*. So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." No power committed to any of us has greater implications for good or evil than the power of speech. Therefore, it is only reasonable that we give considerable thought to the way we use this power.

GENERAL INSTRUCTION

Matthew 12 is one of the most searching chapters of the New Testament. Part of what Jesus says here deals with the tongue. It talks about the tree and its fruit.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (vss. 32-33).

The heart is the tree, and the mouth is the fruit of the tree. The tree (heart) is known by its fruit (words). What comes out of your mouth is the indication of what is in your heart. Jesus then goes on to apply this very specifically to our words.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (vs. 35).

There's no in-between good or evil. It's either good all the way or evil all the way. It's the same stream all the way through. It cannot change.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (vs. 36-37).

Ultimately, the destiny of our soul is settled by our words. We must give account for every idle word that we speak. God *never* uses idle words. Every word that God says, He stands behind. He says, "Let your words be like that. Don't use idle words. If you do, you will have to give an account of them."

The epistle of James probably deals more thoroughly and searchingly with the tongue than any other New Testament writing. We'll just look at one passage in James.

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain (1:26).

I don't want to be negative or appear critical, but as far as I'm concerned, that one stroke of the pen writes off seventy-five percent of religion practiced in the United States. The people who practice religion do not control their tongues. And the Bible says, "If you don't control your tongue, your religion is vain."

PROBLEMS WITH THE TONGUE

Let's consider seven specific problems that we

find in dealing with the tongue.

Problem 1 is *excessive talking*, and the following two scriptures deal with this point.

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin [You cannot speak too much without saying the wrong thing]: but he that refraineth his lips is wise (Prov. 10:19).

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words (Eccles. 5:3).

If a person talks all the time, he is simply telling you what he is—for "a fool's voice is known by the multitude of his words."

Furthermore, bear in mind that just as Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." A restless tongue denotes a restless heart. A person who can never keep quiet is not at rest, no matter how much he may talk about peace and joy. In all these things he advertises his inner disquiet by what runs out of his mouth all the time.

Problem 2 is *idle words*.

We've already mentioned this, so we'll just touch on it briefly. We've already looked at Matthew 12:36, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof." There is a corresponding verse in the Sermon on the Mount.

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Mt. 5:37).

The history of the English language is one of words whose meaning has been lost by misuse. Think of words like "fantastic." They don't mean anything today because when people wanted to use a strong word to impress people, they used those words. Overemphasis quickly ruins a word's effect. The best way to impress people is not to use impressive words, but simply to say what you mean.

Years ago when I was at Eton College, we had a class in English on "The Essence of Vulgarity in Literature." That was before the days when vulgar meant simply obscene. During the class discussion, someone came up with a response that has remained in my mind to this day. He quoted this passage from a Shakespearean play: "Methinks the fellow doth protest too much." Vulgarity is saying too much, overdoing it. That is precisely what Jesus was warning against when He urged us to say, "yea," when we mean "yea," and "nay," when we mean "nay."

When you meet a person who speaks like that, you'll listen to what he has to say.

**A person who can never keep quiet
is not at rest, no matter how much
he may talk about peace and joy.**

Problem 3 is *gossip*.

I do not joke about gossip because it is a terrible thing. Although I know men can gossip, too, I basically agree with Ern Baxter's comment that "Gossip is a woman's occupational hazard," because a woman in ordinary society has far more temptation and opportunity to gossip than a man. But I am aware that men gossip, too.

Let's see what the Bible says about gossip.

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour (Lev. 19:16).

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly (Prov. 18:8).

Do you know that it is possible to literally kill somebody with words? I know of ministers who died under the reproach, shame and wounds of malicious tongues. Jeremiah 18:18 says that Jeremiah's enemies said, "Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Many servants of God died, having been smitten with the tongue.

In the New Testament we'll look at two references.

And withal they learn to be idle [This is spoken about women in the church], wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Tim. 5:13).

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters (1 Pet. 4:15).

Isn't it remarkable that the busybody is listed in company with murderers, thieves, and evildoers.

Most religious people would be horrified to be classified as murderers, thieves or evildoers, but many of them are busybodies.

Problem number 4 is *lying*.

Let's start again in Proverbs.

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19).

Out of those seven things that are hateful to God, three relate to the tongue: a lying tongue, a false witness, and sowing discord among brethren.

Proverbs 12:22 confirms this by saying, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." The word "abomination" is the strongest word that can be used to describe something that displeases God. On the other hand, the rest of that verse tells us, "but they that deal truly are his delight."

Our last scripture on lying is from Revelation, which contains three warnings on the dangers of lying in its last two chapters. Revelation 21:8 says,

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

All liars are headed for the lake of fire. I don't want to dwell on this, but let's be honest—there are many Christian liars. Although I'm not the judge, I wonder what will happen to them in the last day. I don't want to ignore the word of God which says that *all* liars will end up in the lake of fire. I believe that means just what it says; but let's also remember that there is always repentance for everyone that will turn back to God.

Problem 5 is *flattery*.

I don't think most people understand how dangerous flattery is, and how unacceptable it is to God. As a preacher, I appreciate genuine gratitude and expressions of appreciation from people, but I've learned to be on my guard because many preachers have been ensnared by flattery. I could name men who were flattered so much that they allowed themselves to be captivated and lost their ministries as a

result.

Psalm 12:1-3 says this:

Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

They speak vanity [insincerity] every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.

That is very clear, and again I think most people would agree that there is a great deal of insincerity among religious people—a lot of sweet talk that really doesn't amount to anything.

Beware of him that flattereth with his lips.

Problem 6 is *hastiness with your words*.

In Proverbs 29:20 it says, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him." That's a very searching statement. Don't speak everything you feel the moment you feel it. If you do, you'll end up with serious problems. Learn to keep it in.

In Psalm 106 we have a rather tragic picture of Moses, who forfeited the privilege of leading God's people into the promised land because of one rash sentence that he spoke. If anything should show us how particular God is about the way we speak, it is this incident.

The children of Israel were complaining about not having water, and God told Moses, "Go ahead with the people and speak to the rock. When you speak to it, the water will come out."

Now Moses had previously brought water out of a rock by smiting it with his rod and because he was really angry with those people, instead of doing what God said, he smote the rock again and said, "Must we bring forth water for you rebels?" God honored him and the water came out, but afterwards, in a private discussion with Moses, God said, "Moses, you've lost the privilege of leading My people into the promised land because you didn't honor Me with your words."

This is referred to in Psalm 106:32-33:

They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that *it went ill with Moses for their sakes*:

Because they provoked his spirit so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Do you know that when your spirit gets provoked, you often speak unadvisedly with your lips? That is hastiness, and God warns us against it.

NEW WINE

Problem 7 is *negative talking*.

This is one of the "respectable sins" regularly practiced by religious people. Usually, it isn't considered a sin. "I don't have any faith." "I don't believe I can get the money in time." "I just know I'll have to have an operation." The words may all be very polite and respectable and religious, but in many cases they are very unacceptable to God.

Many of us dig our own graves with our mouths. A lot of people are dead today who didn't intend to die. They died because of what they said.

I'll give you one example from Numbers 13, which is the record of the spies who were sent into the promised land. All twelve spies saw the same thing, and all had the same experience. There was nothing different in their circumstances or background. Ten of them came back and said, "Oh, it's a good land, but it's full of giants. The cities are walled up to heaven, and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight." Two spies said, "It's a wonderful land. Let's go in and take it." The contrast between the two outlooks is evident in Numbers 13:30.

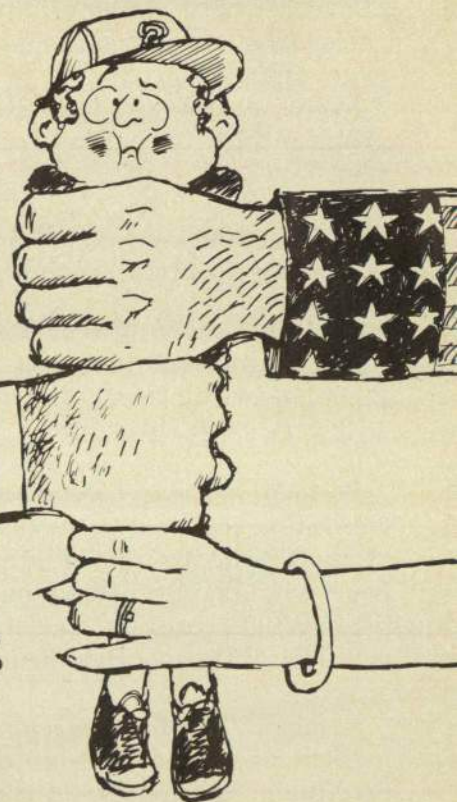
And Caleb [with his companion Joshua] stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Just Around the Corner

September's New Wine:

**WHO
OWNS
YOUR
CHILD?**

**You,
the government,
or someone else?**

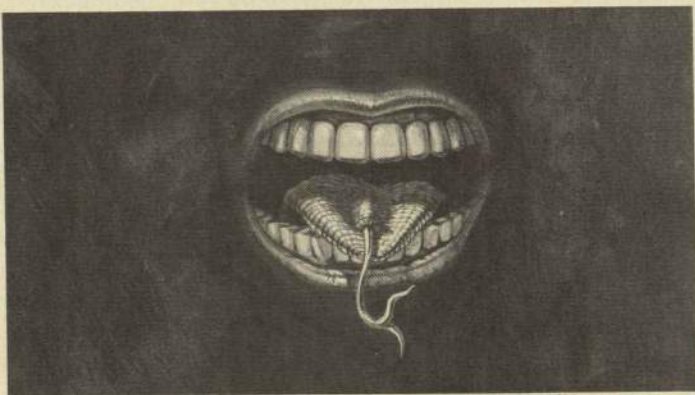


But the men [the other ten spies] that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

Joshua and Caleb said, "We are able"; the other ten said, "We are not able." Everyone of them sealed his destiny by what he said. The ones who said they were not able were *not* able and the ones who said they were able *were* able. They settled their own destiny by what they said, and Christians do that time and time again.

SEVEN REMEDIES

We come now to the remedies to these seven problems concerning the tongue, and strangely enough, there are seven of these too.



Remedy One: Recognize misuse of the tongue as a heart problem.

We've already seen in Matthew 12:33-34 that the problem is in our hearts. In addition, James 3:10-12 says,

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter.

Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?

So again the heart is compared to the tree, and the words that come out to the fruit. Proverbs 4:23, one of my favorite passages of scripture, says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." What comes out of your mouth comes from your heart. The mouth is the barometer of the heart.

Remedy Two: Confess your sins and be cleansed.

Many people do not want to use the word "sin" in describing their misuse of the tongue. But wrong

talking is sin. When we come to grips with it as sin, we'll begin to see some results. As long as we tolerate it, excuse it, or try to brush it off, there will be no change. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God has a remedy for the problems of the tongue, but until we acknowledge, confess and repent of them as sin, seeking God for forgiveness and cleansing, we're not accepting God's remedy.

Remedy Three: Refuse evil, yield to God.

There's a double decision that must be made. Paul says in Romans 6:12-13 that first we are to *deny the devil access and use* of the members of our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness under sin. Tell the devil, "You can't have my hands; you can't have my feet; and above all, you can't have my tongue. When Jesus died, He purchased my tongue together with the rest of me, and Satan, I am not going to let you control my tongue."

Second, *yield yourselves unto God* and your members as instruments unto righteousness under obedience. Deliberately tell God that you want your tongue to be an instrument of righteousness and that you are yielding it to Him for that purpose.

Remedy Four: Understand why you have a tongue.

If you don't understand that, you'll never really move into what God offers you. Why has God put a tongue in your mouth? The Scriptures tell us.

In Psalm 16:9, the psalmist David says,

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

What was David referring to when he said, "my glory"? We find the answer where Peter quotes this psalm in Acts 2:26: "Therefore did my heart rejoice, and *my tongue* was glad." Your glory is your tongue. Why? Because it's given to you for one supreme purpose: to glorify God.

Your tongue is your glory. If you can take that truth and meditate on it and act on it, it will revolutionize your life.

Remedy Five: Decide to praise God.

Praise is the result of a decision. That's why David said, "My heart is *fixed*. I will give thanks." I once said, "Even if the ceiling falls in, I'm going to praise God." I was away preaching at the time and called home to ask, "How are things going?" "Oh fine," came the response, "the ceiling fell in." So I was

caught in my own testimony, and I had to give thanks.

Let's look at David's decisions. The introductory small print at the beginning of Psalm 34 tells us that David was in the court of the Philistine king, running away to save his life, pretending he was mad. At that time he made this decision: "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (vss. 1-3).

First you make the individual decision: "I'm going to do it." Then you find other people that are like-minded, and you say, "Let's do it together." But the personal decision comes first.

Remedy Six: Remember Christ, your high priest.

This is a tremendous area of truth: Christ is our high priest, interceding for us—representing us—in heaven.

What you say with your mouth is the limitation of what He can do for you in heaven. If you have a weak confession, you have a weak high priest on your behalf because He's the high priest of your confession.

Hebrews 3:1 says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." He is the high priest of what you say. If you keep your lips sealed, He has nothing to say about you.

Hebrews 10:21 & 23 says it this way:

Having a high priest over the house of God . . .

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

Make your profession, keep on making it, and don't stop. That's what it means in simple English.

Remedy Seven: Submit to the discipline of the Body of Christ.

This is the last recommendation. One realm of our lives which is definitely subject to the discipline of the Body is the way we talk about one another. If you are under the discipline of the Body, you will not permit yourself to speak about other people because, for one reason, it is embarrassing when you have to go to them and apologize. And if you don't go and apologize, you're headed for worse trouble yet. So keep out of it in the first place.

Let's look at one passage—Matthew 18:15-17.

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.

That's discipline. Don't go and tell everybody else first. That's the normal reaction of most Christians. If somebody upsets me, I don't tell him—I tell everybody except the brother who offended me. Then it's almost impossible to heal the breach later.

If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican.

That is discipline, and we're all subject to it if we're members of the Body of Christ. Now there are two aspects to this: First, if somebody does something I believe is wrong, what am I to do? I'm to go speak to that person to heal the breach. In most cases if you do it that way, the breach will be healed.

Then the other side to it—and this is where most people slip up—is if somebody comes to you and says, "Do you know what Brother Jones said about me? You know how he's treated me?" If that happens, you have to say, "Have you spoken to Brother Jones?" If he says, "no," then say, "Well, don't speak to me." Now that is real discipline. Otherwise, you become an accessory after the fact, in legal terms, and you become responsible for blowing up that situation and making a breach in the Body of Christ.

This is where most of us slip up. Proverbs says, "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue," (Prov. 25:23). If a backbiting tongue comes, so should an angry countenance. It's legitimate to be angry. Don't welcome a person who has backbiting words. If people continually come to your home with stories about other people, just tell them your living room is not a trash depot. If they want to dump their garbage, tell them to find another place.

In conclusion, if you have read this message and have realized that you have sinned with your tongue, or have any of the problems we have covered, I suggest you apply these seven remedies, and confess your problem now as a sin. If you have wounded another believer, you may need to go to him and ask him to forgive you. Face the truth about your sin and ask God to forgive you. Ask Him to cleanse you, and then believe Him for forgiveness and cleansing. ♥

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The first of two articles by Ern Baxter on



THE CHARISMATIC CRISIS

Is the Party Over?

by Ern Baxter

ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, the religious world was aroused by a spiritual movement which was no respecter of denominations and which became known as the "charismatic movement."

I believe it is a valid visitation. But, I suggest there is a "charismatic crisis." From my standpoint, this movement is facing a serious crisis which can simply be put this way: "Grow up, or retard!"

The option is not "Grow up or *stand still*," because there is no such thing as standing still in God.

It is either progression or retardation. I believe the charismatic movement is facing a crisis that can be defined in those terms. It is not sure it wants to grow up. It continues to play the same games it played five or six years ago. If you take the simple analogy of a growing child, you would be very concerned if your child was doing the same things today that he did five years ago.

Throughout Church history the vitality of the Holy Spirit's presence has been opposed by different

forms of religious antagonism. In the beginning every Christian was charismatic. There is no such thing in the New Testament as someone who had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was part of the initiation rite into the Kingdom. Every New Testament Christian came in by repentance, faith, baptism, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Each of the Pauline epistles has a distinctive purpose, and I suggest that the epistle to the Corinthians deals with charismatic crisis in Paul's day; and it deals with charismatic crisis in our day as well.

The Corinthian church had all the charismatic gifts and enablements. They were "enriched." They were "plutocrats" spiritually. There was no gift and no utterance and no charisma that was not in the Corinthian church.

However, in chapter 3 Paul speaks sternly:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

For ye are yet carnal . . . (1 Cor. 3:1-3a).

They were "gifted," but they were carnal! Is that possible?

Obviously it is. The Apostle Paul said they came "behind in no gift," but also that they were an immature, spoiled people who refused to grow up and assume their responsibilities.

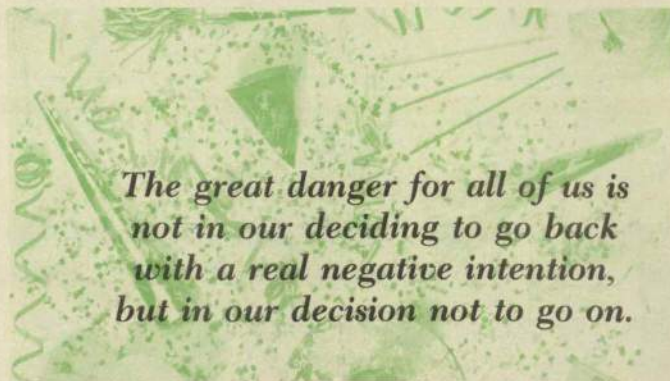
For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

The Corinthians—with all their charisma—began to stray from God's purpose and get off the track. They needed serious correction in three areas. We'll cover the first one in this article and the others in the next issue.

Failure to comprehend the divine purpose.

Do you know it is possible for you and me to be Christians, go to heaven when we die, and yet miss God's purpose on the earth? A graphic illustration of this is the nation of Israel, our fathers, the majority of whom died in the wilderness. They were members of "the church in the wilderness," a church that did not obey the purpose of God. They knew God's purpose, but wouldn't walk in it. When they came to Kadesh-Barnea, to go into Canaan, they balked as a congregation.

The wilderness represents legitimate, temporary immaturity. You don't expect your nine-year-old boy to act eighteen. There is a place for immaturity on the way to maturity. Immaturity will naturally give way to maturity. If it doesn't, you have a problem. The wilderness was that immaturity, in type.



When Israel refused to go into maturity, which is the land of Canaan, God didn't send them back into Egypt, which is the place of "lostness." He sent them back into the wilderness, which is the place of "immaturity," and that is where they died—in immaturity. If that analogy holds, is it fair to say that we are looking at a generation of charismatics who are risking the possibility of dying in immaturity?

If the letter to the Hebrews is saying anything in chapter 6, it is, "You Hebrews have been converted long enough to know that you shouldn't be playing on these keys now. Having *laid* the foundation, let us go on unto perfection, not *laying* again . . ."

In a race all the runners compete, but only one wins the prize. Paul says, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all?" (1 Cor. 9:24)

He is talking about the ongoingness of our Christian life corporately as well as individually. Paul himself says, "I, Paul, fear; lest after having preached to others, I myself be disapproved." How much more, then, is it possible for *us* to be disapproved in running the race of God's purpose?

In chapter 10:1-4 Paul says, "Brothers, in the first part of my letter to you I said you had been enriched by God in all utterance; that you came behind in no gift. God has blessed you with His grace; you are a blessed, redeemed people under the hand of a faithful God. But what you don't seem to understand is that the gifts of God have not been given to you to squander—they have been given to you to use responsibly for a *purpose*. I want to remind you of what happened to our fathers. All of them had everything you have: they were baptized with the Holy Spirit in type under the cloud; they were baptized under Moses, with the water baptism in the

Red Sea; they all ate the supernatural meat, the manna; they all drank supernatural water out of the Rock. They were charismatics just like you."

God gifted them. God gave them every charisma. They came behind in no gift. But, I want you to remember what happened to them—with the great majority of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

What is the wilderness? Immaturity!

At what point were they sent back into the wilderness? At the point where they refused to go on.

No matter where we are in the process of growing up, the great danger for all of us is *not* in our deciding to go back with a real negative intention—"I have decided I want to backslide"—but in our decision not to *go on*. Israel was spoken of as a "backsliding heifer." Such a heifer is not a heifer that is backing off—it just refuses to go forward. God is concerned about us backing off, but He's equally concerned, if not more so, about us sticking all fours to the ground and refusing to go on. Why? Because if I stay here, I can fool myself into believing that I'm all right. If I started to back up, I might have some twinges of conscience, but if I'm staying where I am, I can say, "Well, Lord, I haven't gone back a bit." That sounds good. "Lord, I'm faithful. I'm right here, Lord, where I've been for the last ten years. Hallelujah!" The Lord says, "What are you doing there? I've moved ten years up the road."

What is the serious subtle thing about that kind of backsliding? It gives all the semblances of continuing to be what you are without being what you should be. It's reaching a point where you don't go on, so that the good becomes an enemy of better, and the better becomes the enemy of the best.

Why does Paul write to the Corinthians, and say, "With a great majority of them God was not well pleased"? That is a heavy word. Paul is saying this: "Corinthians, the majority of the Israelite Church died in the wilderness, and I'm writing this to you to tell you that if you don't straighten up, the majority of you are going to die in the wilderness also." Would it be fair to imply from what I am saying that if we, as God's spirit-filled, charismatic, or whatever-you-want-to-call-it people, do not clean up our act, get on the road, get moving in the purposes of God, that the word Paul brought to the Corinthians is applicable to us? We, too, could die in our immaturity.

"Now these things happened unto them as illustrations of the way in which God works and are recorded as a warning for our benefit in whose lives the climax of the ages has been reached." If any-

thing, our situation is much more serious than was Israel's. Why? God's dealing with Israel occurred early in the process of God's historical activity. In contrast, we are at the climax. If I read my New Testament correctly, God has no "Plan B" up His sleeve. We are it. If you subscribe to certain eschatological views that get you off that hook, I think you need to take a good hard look at those views. The Bible is very clear that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation—that the Church of God is the last redeemed community in the earth, and that this is the end of the ages—the climax of history and the Messianic age.

When you and I fail to comprehend the divine purpose, then we have lost our incentive for going on.

What do you think the Corinthians thought Paul was saying? I think they heard it very clearly. "You are in danger of dying in the wilderness." I wonder, dear people, how many of us are satisfied to die in the wilderness.

Now the interesting thing is—God didn't take the cloud from those disobedient people; He didn't take the manna from them; He didn't take the water from them. He just took from them the opportunity to go on to maturity and they were never allowed to enter Canaan. To the Corinthians and to the Hebrews the apostolic word is, "If you don't go in, God is forced to do something." His judgment is the withdrawal, from those who won't take it, of the opportunity of going in later on.

The charismatic crisis includes the failure to comprehend the divine purpose. It's the failure to understand that it is not enough to celebrate healings, supernatural manna, supernatural water, supernatural provisions, to stay put all your life celebrating that. But we have a responsibility to go into the land, and the land is where the redeemed community demonstrates God's government.

I don't believe God sent this charismatic dimension in the last fifteen years just to have conferences and get goosebumps. I think He sent it to us that we might have a dynamic, whereby we could fulfill the purpose of God. The Corinthians did not comprehend the divine purpose. Do we? Do we understand that Jesus said, "Light the world. Salt the earth. Get on out there with your charismatic power and don't just stay in meetings. Touch all areas of life. Bring integrity into every legitimate area of human experience." We need a real river of Christian teaching: Christian lawyers, Christian doctors, Christian architects, Christian farmers, Christian businessmen to touch every area of life. Is it too much to ask? ♥

FATHERGRAM®

SPECIAL ISSUE NUMBER 2



A Service to Fathers®

FATHERGRAM

P. O. Box Z

Mobile, Alabama 36616

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WHAT IS FATHERGRAM? *Fathergram* is a bi-monthly newsletter to fathers, designed to help them fulfill their responsibilities and keep them informed. *Fathergram* is a reminder, but not a substitute for personal creativity. The "telegram" style and brevity helps us say the most to you in the fewest words . . . and least amount of time.

WHY FATHERGRAM? Dads need to get the message: The family is in trouble, that means society is in trouble. God holds fathers responsible (see Deut. 11, Ps. 78, Eph. 6).

Two years ago Vernon and Charles Simpson felt a burden to do something about this fundamental problem. Together they bring more than 70 years of pastoral experience to this effort.

WHEN FATHERS FAIL: Father failure affects us all. I recently received research on several notorious historical figures: Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, and Jim Jones. Soon, I will receive data on Amin, Hitler, and others. I am amazed at the similarities in their relationships to their fathers—or lack of relationship. In each case a single failure took a devastating toll on society. With more and more absentee fathers, what are our social prospects? It's not my purpose to play on fear—the facts however are clear . . . Can inflation, crime and social decay be halted apart from a significant change in fatherhood? We say, "No." We need an "Elijah" to come and "turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers . . ." or else we will be cursed! (See Mal. 4:6.)

Fathergram is aiming at the root of our spiritual and social problems: Our identification with God *the Father* through His Son. — Charles

LETTERS:

Dear Brothers in Christ, My wife and I and our new son are not in much of a position to do more than tithe to our church and to the Christian community of which we are members. Currently I am a full-time church worker and am only able to make ends meet by the grace of God.

Still, I thought I would like to give you my personal spending money for two weeks. *Fathergram* is an essential ministry. More than ever our society needs family support systems. In Christ's love, D.M.

Thanks. Editors

ENCOURAGEMENT: Praise the Lord! This is a vital message and ministry for this hour. DeVerne Fromke

Thanks, Brother Fromke. Your approval means a lot to us! Editors

SUGGESTIONS: I have found an opportunity to share truth with my children through songs. They enjoy singing and want to know the meaning of the song.

Very good (Scripture songs are the best.) Editors

TEACHING MATERIAL: (John 13)

Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly ministry. But His disciples still had problems getting along with one another. Like many of us, they argued about who was the greatest, and other things that indicated they all had a lot of pride.

One evening they came to a house where they were to eat together. They were hot and tired from the walk. Their feet were dirty because the sandals that they wore didn't keep out the dirt. Ordinarily someone would have provided a basin of water and a towel to clean their feet. This time no one was there to do it. Though it was a regular custom, not one of them moved to do it. Each one thought, "One of the others ought to wash our feet."

Soon Jesus moved to the basin of water and picked up the towel. "Oh no! Not Jesus!" they must have thought. "He's our master and teacher!" Peter protested, but Jesus washed his feet anyway. Soon He had washed all of their feet—even Judas, who would betray him.

When He finished He said, "You call me 'Lord' and 'teacher.' If I have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet."

DISCUSS

1. What effect did Jesus' act have on the disciples?
2. What effect does it have on you?
3. Why did they not want to wash each other's feet?
4. Is that why we do not want to serve each other?
5. Why do people argue?
6. Would serving each other make for peace?

HERITAGE: Recently I visited in a home where there was a little girl less than two years old. She was learning to carry on a conversation. She sat up in Dad's lap. With great pride she pointed at her father's chest and said, "This is my Daddy!" She repeated her phrase proudly several times.

Shortly afterward I attended a Father-Son prayer meeting. A father put his arm around his son soon to graduate from high school. "This is my son. I'm proud of him." The son beamed and said, "This is my Dad. I'm proud of him, too."

Heritage is preserving trust from generation to generation. — Vernon

TIP: **Maturation** is the result of teaching the children to do what you do. **Communication** is learning to participate in the things they do.

NEWS: Negative news can bring positive action. Teenage alcoholism is currently under study in several nations. Russia, Austria, England, and the U.S. are a few nations that are becoming concerned. The Church of

Scotland estimates 98% of the boys and 96% of the girls drink regularly before 17 years of age.

In the U.S. last year 4.7 million families experienced violence against at least one parent by a teenage child.

New Jersey is in the middle of a legislative battle over sexual relations between a consenting minor (13 to 16 years old) and someone older. A recent bill legalized those relationships. As ages for "adult" related activities are lowered, a vital period of character formation is being eradicated.

Stay "in touch"—stay involved.

HOW TO USE FATHERGRAM: (1) Read it carefully. (2) Look for ideas that may apply to your family. (3) Ask the Lord for creative ideas that relate to your family specifically. (4) Get a calendar and plan time together—write down birthdays and special occasions. (5) Set aside some time each week specifically for instruction and sharing.

HOW TO HELP FATHERGRAM: Pray for it. Support it financially. Give us suggestions. Recommend it to friends. Use it to "witness" to uninvolved fathers.

Special thanks to you who have written.

In Him,

Vernon D. Simpson
Charles V. Simpson

HOW TO RECEIVE FATHERGRAM

Fathergram is available to all those who want to receive it. Although **Fathergram** is supported by the gifts of its readers, a contribution or subscription fee is not required. Requests to have **Fathergram** sent to other fathers are also accepted. Please address all mail to:

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Help Wanted:

To Extend the Outreach of *New Wine*

We have something of a problem that you can help us with. For some ten years now, *New Wine* has blessed thousands of people every month. Through the years we have enjoyed moderate success in our attempts to increase our circulation and extend the ministry of *New Wine*, yet despite our broad circulation, we feel there are still thousands more people who would benefit from receiving it regularly, if only we knew who they were.

This is where you come in. You can be our eyes, and ears and hands to find out who these people are and help us to send them *New Wine*. Every day you probably meet or talk with at least one person who would really enjoy getting it regularly.

"What kind of people are you talking about?" you ask. Well, we've given that some thought, and have come up with four suggestions that you might like to try. Of course, there are hundreds more you might think of.

1. *New Wine* is an evangelistic tool. Since *New Wine* carries many practical articles with universal appeal, it is an effective means for touching those who don't know the Lord or who have fallen away from a close walk with Him.

2. *Leaders benefit from New Wine.* *New Wine*

periodically carries articles for and about leadership which are of specific interest to pastors and Christian leaders. *New Wine* is also a good study and reference source.

3. *Neighbors can be touched through New Wine.* To develop more than a casual relationship with your neighbors, have *New Wine* sent to them as an expression of your genuine interest and concern for them.

4. *New Wine can encourage those that are discouraged.* People in hospitals and doctors' offices often need encouragement and spiritual strength. Obtain permission for *New Wine* to be placed in the magazine racks in waiting rooms in your locale.

How do I help?

If you would like to have *New Wine* sent to someone, just use the form below to send in your name and the names of those you want to get the magazine. Unless you specify otherwise, we'll send them a letter telling them *New Wine* is on its way at your request. You can also help us to offset the expense of sending them the magazine for the first year by enclosing a \$10.00 tax-deductible contribution for each name you send in.

Please type or print.

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please send *New Wine* Magazine for one year to the friends whose names are listed below. Enclosed is a \$10.00 gift for each person recommended. I realize this does not represent a subscription, but a tax-deductible gift which makes it possible for you to send *New Wine*.

Name: _____

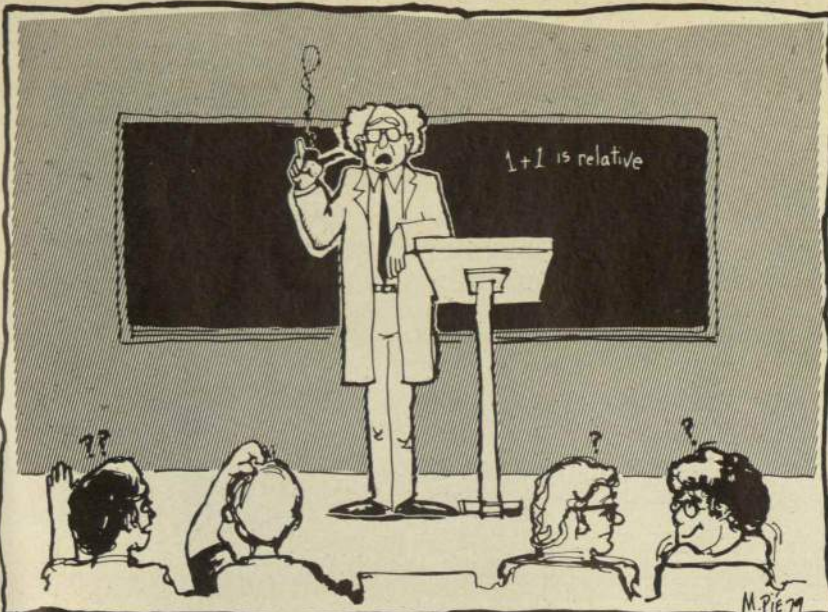
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Please do NOT advise my friend that I have asked you to send *New Wine*.

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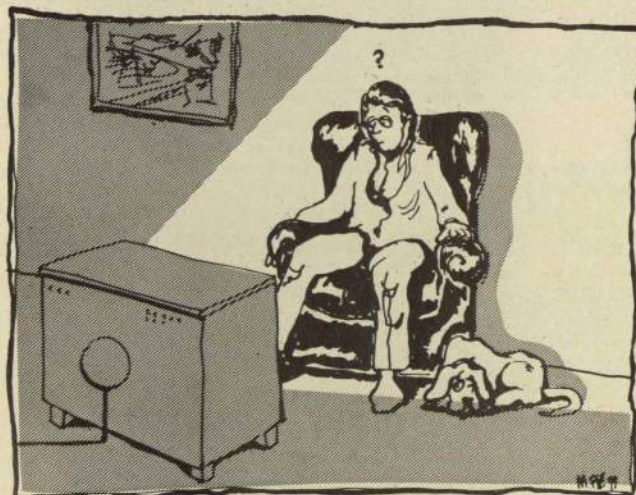


Communicating can be humorous
when you look at...

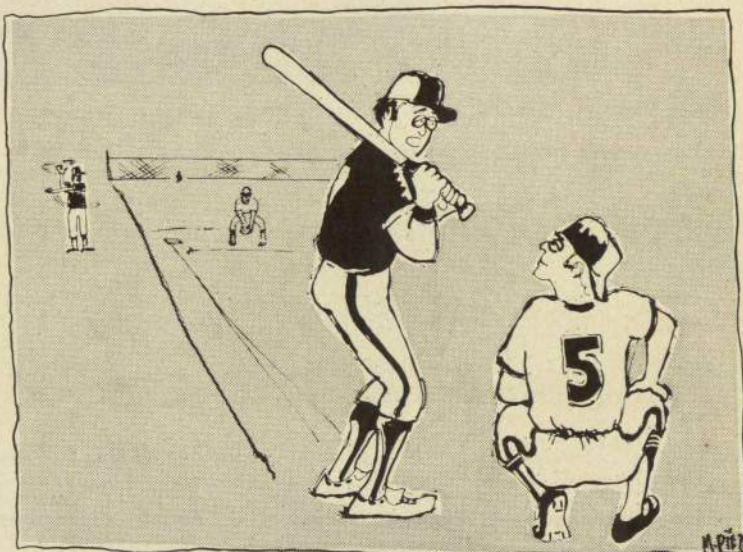
the lighter Side

by Mark Pié

Communication is any *modus operandi* by or through which eventuates the reciprocal transposition of information between or among entities or groups via commonly understood systems of symbols, signs, or behavioral patterns of activity.



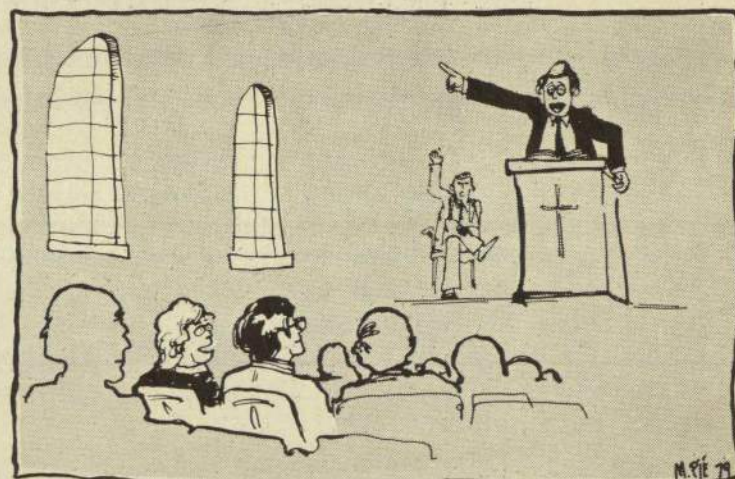
I CAN UNEQUIVOCALLY STATE that if I am elected, if at all possible, and contingent upon proper conditions, and if the economy remains stable,...



Either my third base coach is signaling me to "swing away" or he wants me to order a pizza to go, with anchovies.

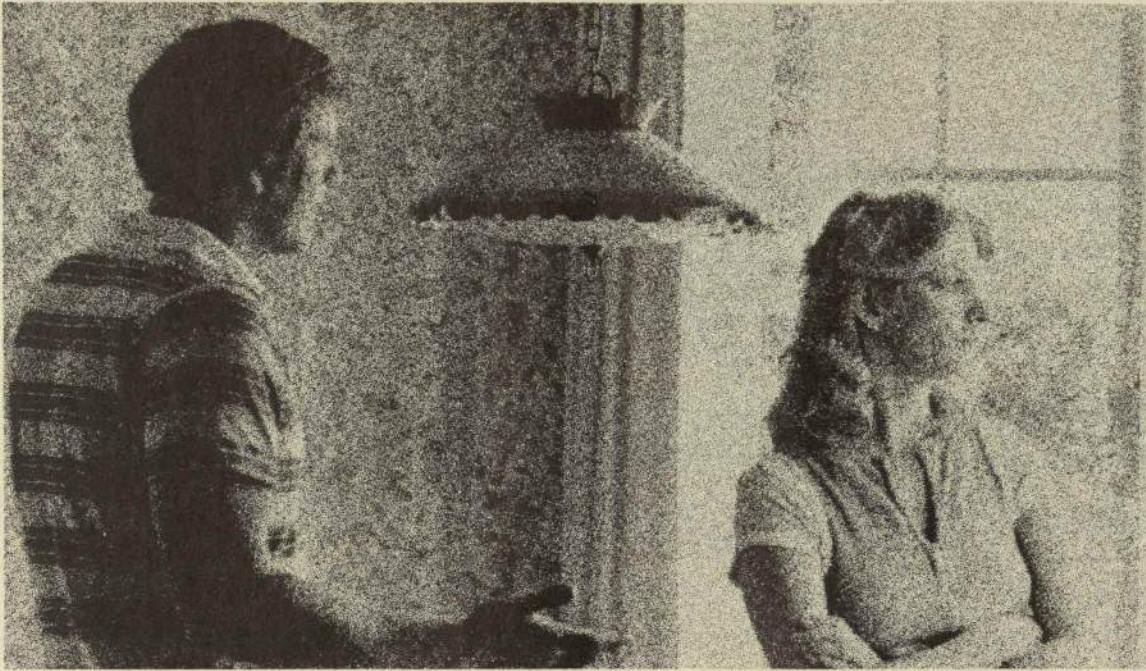


I don't get it. I distinctly remember saying "no" at least four times.



I just love it when he teaches on submission, authority and commitment. By the way, dear, where are we going to church next week?

You Can Work It Out



by Dick Leggatt

SHORTLY AFTER we had met a couple who are now friends of ours, they astonished us with the statement that they had never had an argument in all their years of marriage. Having had our fair share of disagreements, my wife, Cindi, and I began to watch with interest when we were together socially with them to see what their secret was. A few days later, we happened to be in the car with them when they hit a difference of opinion, and we got to see firsthand that their "secret" was more a matter of semantics.

Their discussion went something like this:

HUSBAND (with feeling): "*Dear*, that's not the way it happened."

WIFE (with expression): "Yes, that's exactly the way it happened, *Dearest*."

HUSBAND (through slightly clenched teeth): "*Darling*, really—you're quite mistaken."

While all this was going on, there was no place for my wife and me to go to remove ourselves from the fray, so we busied ourselves with such important tasks as gathering the lint from the backseat, counting the billboards as they went by, whistling the "Star-Spangled Banner," and generally trying our best to blend into the upholstery to avoid intruding into that difficult moment. What they probably would have called "a difference of opinion" we would simply have called an argument. It was a relief to discover that we weren't so abnormal—every married couple has such moments.

Whether it's called an argument, a slight disagreement, a difference of opinion—the fact is that people occasionally disagree, and the resolution of that disagreement has to take place verbally. It is part of everyday living, and particularly true in that most intricate of all relationships—marriage.

I don't claim to be an expert in the field of communication in marriage. Through the years my record of successes and failures in communication is probably 50-50. But what I have observed through contact with others, private study, and personal experience is that periodic disagreement is an inevitable, *normal* part of marriage. It's the nuts and bolts of "these two shall become one flesh." In the process of two unique individual wills becoming one, there is bound to be some occasional friction. In this article, I want to explore some reasons and remedies for that friction, and to suggest some practical guidelines for successful communication in marriage, particularly during times of disagreement.

I believe that bad communication in marriage, particularly improperly handled arguments, has taken an incalculable toll on American families. Arguments and confrontations, no matter how slight, involve factors of stress and tension, and in that environment, uncontrolled words can slash and wound in a devastating way, tearing away at the

fiber of even a good marriage. Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." The death of many basically good marriages has been instigated by an unbridled tongue. That's why we want to provide a few guidelines to help you restrict what you say during the emotional heat and tension of a confrontation with your mate.

SEVEN THINGS NOT TO SAY

The range of ways that spouses verbally assail one another in an argument is probably limitless. But beyond the obvious expressions you should avoid, I want to point out seven that are more subtle, yet devastating in their implications and effect.

1) "You never do what I tell you."

Avoid using the word "never." First of all, it is terribly inaccurate. "Never" means your spouse has not *once* done what was required. The most frequent reaction to such inaccuracy is defensiveness and self-justification on the part of your mate, which will ultimately blind him or her to any truth in the point you were trying to communicate. "Never" is an exaggeration that is self-defeating.

Besides being inaccurate, "never" is downright discouraging. What you're saying to your mate is, "You're an absolute failure—you haven't done one thing right." It also communicates that any attempt they have made to comply with you has been meaningless to you, counting for nothing. That's enough to make anyone give up trying. So *never* use the word "never."

2) "You're just like your mother (or father)!"

On the surface, this doesn't seem like too damaging a remark, but there are implications attached to it that really make it sting. First, it's a subtle way of being critical of your mate's parents. You're not saying it to point out all the positive traits your mate in-

herited from his or her parents, but rather the negative ones that your mate didn't want in the first place. Parents pass along not only good qualities to their children, but also the bad ones, the ones that their children resented in them while they were growing up. Second, to point out such traits is a low blow because your mate didn't choose his parents or the negative input they gave him and he is probably struggling to overcome it. It's never wise to make someone feel responsible for something he didn't do or cannot alter. It's like putting a brand on your mate: "It's hopeless—you can never change."

3) "You are misunderstanding what I'm saying." This is an extremely subtle remark. In fact, it's so subtle that it took me three years to really understand why it hurt my wife so much when I said it. Finally, she asked me a question that opened my eyes: "Isn't it possible that the problem is you're not making yourself clear? What you're implying is 'since I'm communicating perfectly, the fault must be yours, you dummy.'" None of us is a perfect communicator; yet that's what we're claiming when we say, "You are misunderstanding me."

It's much better for *me* to take the responsibility by saying, "Maybe I'm not saying it clearly enough." Such an admission can keep your mate from feeling like it's all his or her fault and eliminate one more barrier to communication.

4) "I can't take any more!"

In moments of crisis, melodramatic statements like this come rushing to the tongue. But melodrama can be an enemy to the solution of complicated issues. Such statements can become an illegal escape from the responsibility to face difficulties squarely.

It's difficult to justify the "I-can't-take-it-any-more" mentality from a scriptural standpoint. God at times does place us in difficult, painful situations, commanding us to *endure*. Paul's admonition in Acts 14:20 to the disciples at Antioch, "Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God," applies just as well to everyday living and particularly to marriage. Our response to pain and difficulty in marriage shouldn't be to bail out when things get tough, but rather to endure.

5) "It's all your fault. You're to blame."

This is an area where Cindi and I have really grappled. Through verbal manipulation and domination, I tried to come away from every disagreement or problem absolutely blameless. That left only one other place for guilt to fall—on Cindi's shoulders. Since women seem more susceptible to guilt than men, one method a man uses to "win" an argument



Dick Leggatt is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a bachelors degree in English Literature. For the past four years he has been Managing Editor of *New Wine*, and is also involved in pastoral ministry with Gulf Coast Fellowship in Mobile, Alabama. He and his wife,

Cindi, have three sons: Christopher, Joshua and David Ben.

is to make his wife feel guilty. However, nobody really wins, because the husband fails to face his responsibility, and the wife languishes under an unbearable burden of guilt. The long-range effects of such a tactic are much too costly to any marriage.

James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed." Admitting your faults allows healing to come to both parties and releases the wife from the guilt a husband might have otherwise put on her.

One other comment: when things go wrong, often *it's nobody's fault* . . . so no blame should be accepted or assigned.

6) "I don't want to talk about it."

This is a very dangerous stage in marriage, for when communication ceases, the avenue for reconciliation is blocked. Even if the only words that can be exchanged are angry ones, they are better than no words at all.

The silent treatment, one of marriage's most common weapons, is never a solution. Resignation to silence is an invitation for bitterness to take root in both parties. Silence only affords unrestrained opportunity to nurse your wounds and think of all the evidence against your husband or wife. I believe that silence is a sin that demands repentance in order for communication to be restored.

7) "I'm leaving."

In most instances, leaving makes matters worse and makes resolution and reconciliation more difficult, if not impossible. Stay and talk it out, no matter how difficult that may be.

KEEPING THINGS UNDER CONTROL

Here are just a few general suggestions for keeping communication under control in any difficult discussion with your husband or wife.

1) Decide right from the start to be open to what your mate says, with a willingness to admit legitimate errors on your part. Let your motive be to discover the truth, not win the argument.

2) Decide to hear your spouse out without interrupting or losing your temper when he or she hits a sensitive nerve.

3) Pray and put on your spiritual armor. Remember that the devil is the one who is fanning the flames and instigating disharmony.

4) Decide not to hurt your husband or wife. Nobody knows how to hurt him or her like you do—you know all the vulnerable, tender spots. Promise yourself that no matter what, you won't take a precious bit of information that your mate has shared with you and use it as a weapon on him, throwing it back in his face.

5) Be willing to be a dumping ground for your husband or wife. Realize that there are times when you just need to let them dump out the garbage and hurt that has accumulated in them *without* retaliation, correction, adjustment, or pat "spiritual" answers.

6) Stick with the main issue and only handle one issue at a time. Try to keep from getting sidetracked onto minor points or something that is past history.

7) Avoid sarcasm and joking until the disagreement is resolved. Sarcasm does little except inflame the discussion. On rare occasions, joking can break the tension and relieve some pressure. Often when I'm irritated, Cindi will say to me, "Would it help if I made a funny face?" At times, she just makes one. Sometimes it breaks the tension—other times it makes *me* want to break something.

When resolution comes, let there be immediate positive action to reinforce the reconciliation. Sincere, healthy forgiveness should be expressed with plenty of hugging. This time of reconciliation is especially important for the sake of your children. If they have seen the beginning of tensions and been aware that Mom and Dad have had a disagreement (though hopefully they haven't had to be spectators to it), let them also be a part of the positive side—the reconciliation. Let them share the hugs and hear the forgiveness. It will instill in them the security, reality and hope that no matter how difficult things become, covenant love allows difficulties to be resolved. Seeing the reality of the entire process—the problem, the need for communication to resolve it, and the reconciliation—will set the pattern for them to deal realistically with conflicts in their own marriages.

One last guideline for settling disputes. If reconciliation alludes you and the situation gets steadily worse, *call for help*. This is one area where a pastor's care makes the difference. If more couples had someone specific who is stable and trustworthy that they could call upon, no matter what the hour or circumstance, to come in and counsel them responsibly,



Don't forget: July 6th is a national day of prayer and fasting.

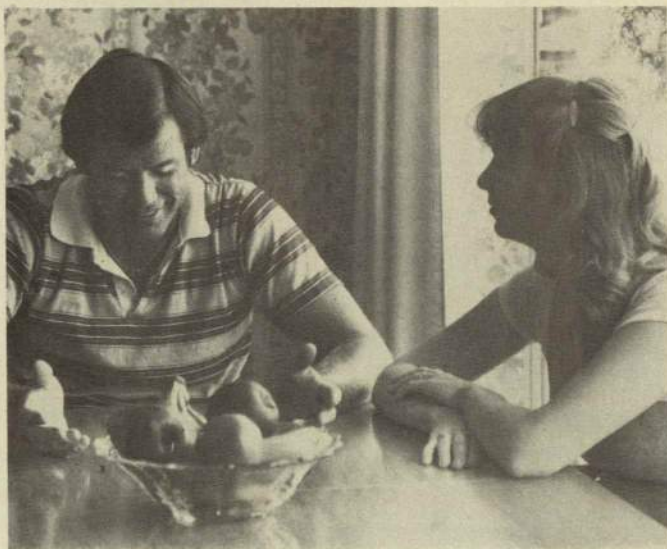
providing the objective viewpoint and sharing from personal experience, many marriages would be saved from the rubbish heap.

FOUNDATIONS FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

When Cindi and I had been married for just four months, having experienced the typical disagreements that the first year of marriage brings, we hit upon a foundation stone which put bedrock under our relationship. During our disagreements, we both said things we didn't really mean and regretted afterward. In one of those unkind exchanges, it was as if God pulled the veil from our eyes to let us see what we were doing to each other. The same thought hit both of us simultaneously. Cindi expressed it first: "Here I am, hurting you . . . and you're the one person I don't want to hurt." I replied, "I don't want to hurt you either."

A simple truth, elementary even, but it was a profoundly important foundation stone to build on.

Let me give seven additional foundation stones for good communication in marriage and the verbal commitments that go with them.



1) TRUST: "I promise not to hurt you."

This is the fruit of the realization I described above. Even though you can realize the need for trust in a moment, it takes time to build. Words are easy enough to say, but real trust in marriage develops from seeing promises kept.

Yet, trust is also an act of faith. It means making yourself vulnerable to one another, even when you're not sure it's entirely safe to do so. Vulnerability is sharing with your mate that precious secret,

hope or desire or those deepest inner fears and weaknesses that plague you, believing that the information will never be used against you as a weapon. It takes faith to make yourself vulnerable, especially when you have been burned in the past. But it's a step of faith that God will honor.

Trust is a primary foundation stone in marriage.

2) RESPECT AND APPROVAL: "You're important to me."

I have placed respect before love in this list, because it is entirely possible to love someone without respecting him. The evidence is your behavior and speech toward your mate. The way you *act* toward him or her in terms of honoring, simple courtesy, thoughtfulness, deference and attentiveness is a barometer of your respect for him.

Approval, however, is the verbal expression of respect. Our communication in marriage should be replete with statements like, "You did a great job!" "You're a good cook," "I'm proud of what you did," and "I'm glad I'm married to you."

Often we think the phrase "I love you" covers all the bases. But I was shocked one time when Cindi responded to my "I love you" with a rather innocent question: "Why?" After a speechless moment, I began to enumerate the qualities I loved about her, realizing that what I was expressing was my approval of her. She needed to hear it, and I needed to say it to give *substance* to my "I love you."

It's not enough to *feel* respect and approval for your mate; you need to *demonstrate* it and *verbalize* it.

3) LOVE: "I love you just the way you are."

Love entails acceptance and redemption. The nature of God's love for us is that He loves and accepts us just as we are. Yet His love draws us redemptively out of sin into salvation. Love in marriage should have those same qualities. You should try to love your mate unconditionally, exactly as he is, even with all the rough spots. There are no strings attached: he doesn't have to change or "measure up" before you can love him. The paradox is that this kind of unconditional love will help motivate him to overcome his faults and weaknesses. That's the redemptive quality of love.

In communicating your love verbally, I don't think it's possible to wear out the phrase "I love you" or to over-communicate to your mate your unqualified acceptance of him.

4) SELF-SACRIFICE: "Your needs come before mine."

Let me give you just one illustration to explain this. When I return home from a conference

or a trip, what *I* want to do is sit quietly and relax. Though Cindi doesn't pressure me, I know what she wants. She wants to hear the details of the excursion—all the details.

It takes self-sacrifice to come out of my silence and communicate with her to the degree *she* desires and in a way that's helpful to *her*. Although I would be perfectly content to say, "Honey, it was a great conference. People were blessed by it. I had a good time. End of message," self-sacrifice in communication demands much more than that. Her needs come before mine.

5) FORGIVENESS: "The slate is clean."

It takes maturity and magnanimity to forgive mistakes, forget them and *never bring them up again*. To do so is the breath of life to a marriage.

6) HONESTY (with moderation): "This is exactly how I feel."

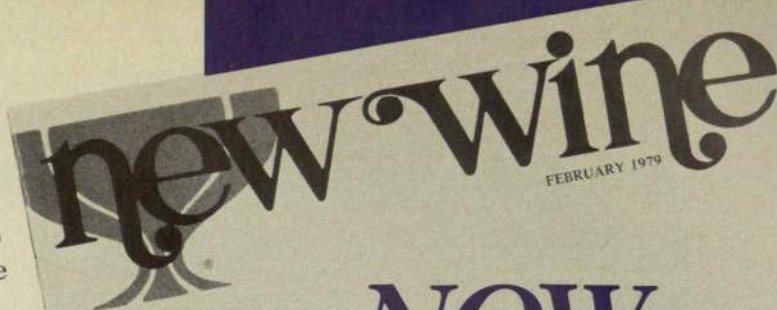
Usually, it's one extreme or another. Either you hide your emotions beneath courteous amenities that deny your true feelings, or you let fly with a brutal barrage of unbridled words inflamed with fierce emotions. Our goal is to learn to be truthful without hedging, nor being insensitive or unnecessarily blunt. Honesty, with balance.

7) COVENANT: "Whatever it takes."

This is the most important foundation stone of all. Our society is rapidly losing its ability to make lasting commitments, let alone the ability to enter into covenant. Marriages last until times get hard, and then the partners quit. An American byword today is, "If it's not easy, don't ask me to do it."

As I understand it, the covenant vows of "for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, 'til death do us part" say it all. Covenant demands unconditional commitment. It says, "No matter how difficult it gets together, we will do whatever it takes to make it." In the years to come, that one quality alone may well distinguish the covenant people of God from the rest of society, for we are those who "... swear to our own hurt, and do not change" (Ps. 15:4).

The application of these principles of communication and their effects upon our marriages can make us almost strangers in our own society. But in times of increasing social disintegration and isolation the world will more and more see the mountain of the house of the Lord emerging into full view, especially through the example of covenantal marriages. Some will curse the mountain and ridicule it—others will run to it, and be saved. ♥



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SECULAR HUMANISM, Part 1

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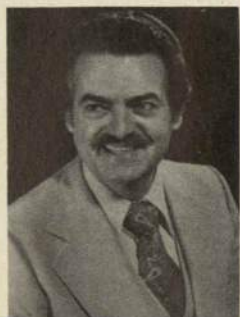
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We talked with Bob Mumford by phone recently and got this report of current events in his family and ministry.

My family and I appreciate the opportunity to bring our friends, the *New Wine* readers, up to date on our family's present emphasis of ministry. We recently completed remodeling our home in Ft. Lauderdale, which has been "our inheritance" since 1970. The remodeling was a family project that we found really enjoyable and profitable. Judy's design and decoration, coupled with the opportunity for all of us to work together on the physical construction of it, has produced a change in our home and in all of us that has been delightful!

Actually, working together on the house refreshed our whole approach to life as a family, and brought quite a change in Bob, Jr. (17) and Eric David (11). In a way, it gave me an opportunity as their father to challenge the boys in a new way to excellence. It also helped all of us develop a sense of participating in the family in a valuable way. As one result of our participating and working together, I've seen Bobby and Eric coming into more of the maturity and discipline of manhood.

Keren, our oldest daughter, has finished her legal secretary degree in California and is now the secretary and receptionist at the new Life Changers office. Beth, our second daughter, has been married a year now. She and Jim Hensley, her husband, are active members of the Covenant Community in Campbell, California. Bob, Jr., has developed carpentry skills, and wants to prepare himself for min-

istry and personal counseling. Eric is changing from a child to a young man. He sticks close to his Dad and wants to enter the ministry.

Our return to Florida from California in the fall of 1978 was God's gift to us. Although our time of ministry in California was very profitable, the community there as well as here, in agreement with other leaders, felt that our permanent home and base of ministry was to be here in Ft. Lauderdale. The covenant community established in California continues under the capable leadership of Paul Petrie, and we're believing God for effective proclamation and witness into the San Francisco area. We rejoice in God's faithfulness!

Life Changers, the instrument of teaching and communication, is experiencing growing pains. The goals that we'll be stressing through Life Changers are threefold:

1.) *Personal maturity.* To present every man complete in Christ according to Colossians 1:28-29.

2.) *Leadership development.* The development of new and qualified leadership according to Ephesians 4:12, capable of equipping the saints for the work of the Kingdom.

3.) *Worldwide evangelism.* The obedience of our Lord's command in Matthew 28:19.

Through His leading and direction, we have purchased a building in Hollywood, Florida. Here we will house, oversee and implement the new Life Changers functions.

In His faithfulness, the Lord has given us the people to manage and to implement the Life Changers vision.

Ray Ostendorf, pastor of South Broward Christian Fellowship, is now President and General Manager of the Life Changers operation. In addition to ministry, Ray is qualified by his background in business, management and marketing. Working with him will be a diverse and qualified group of volunteers who also share a burden for the Life Changers vision.

My recent emphasis in ministry has been the need to *declare* the primary importance of God's Kingdom and the implications of it. Spiritual unity has been my secondary theme. I believe these two "sounds" are being heard by the Body at large, as evidenced by the tremendous response to the recent Jesus '79 rallies across the nation.

If you wish to write and express your appreciation and support for Bob's family and ministry, we encourage you to do so at his new address at Life Changers:

P.O. Box LC
Hollywood, FL 33023.

Letters to the Editor

I've received *New Wine* since 1976, and continue to be blessed by how the Holy Spirit continues to lead the ministry daily.

Sharon M. Burness
Orlando, FL

Since the beginning of this year, every issue of *New Wine* has been exciting, thought-provoking, and current. Thank you for dealing with today's problems and issues with spiritual insight and wisdom.

Steve & Karen Hendrickson
Seattle, WA

I really like the new feature of having selected scriptures that relate to the theme. Also like the cartoons.

Laura P. Chevalier
Mission, KS

The illustrator, M. Pié, in June's issue, is really good—the illustrations are cute, and pointed. May we see more Pié?

Joanne Pugh
Urbana, IL

Ed. Note: You asked for it—you got it. See page 27.

Your articles on cults and deception in the May issue hit close to home and have me studying more of my Bible and scrutinizing my reading material more closely.

Mrs. Steven Henderson
Olympia, WA

Your May issue on Cults was very well done. We know. We've been there. Perhaps our very existence is enough to say that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord will raise up a Standard against him. The sovereign move of God among Mormons alone,

to say nothing of other cults, has greatly encouraged us to continue, knowing that it is worth it all.

Our battle with the cults is not doctrinal near as much as it is to present the real Jesus and get the former cultists firmly grounded in Jesus at the start. Why run their former cults down? Just present Jesus and the real sheep of God who are temporarily trapped in these cult systems will respond. Winning souls is more important to us than winning arguments.

Your handling of this subject was commendable. You didn't have to run them down individually or in the minute details which bog us down and distract the potential Christian believer from seeing Jesus amid all the doctrinal smokescreen of their prison. Thanks for this excellent issue.

Dave Roberts
Ex-Mormons for Jesus
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

We really want to thank you for this last issue of *New Wine*, especially for Bob Mumford's article "Falling from the Way." It was a *big* help in pinpointing some of the things that have happened to us and getting us back on the right track.

Joel & Dianne Chupp
Wooster, OH

The last issue on "Cults" was of great interest to me as I have been approached by several people who are in cults. I especially appreciated the article by Brother Mumford. It really touched some areas in my life.

Daniel Brown
Murfreesboro, TN

I appreciate *New Wine*. I devour it when I receive it each month and then spend the month digesting it and sharing it with others. I especially enjoyed the issues on Secular Humanism and the one on Cults.

Mrs. Karen Wickwire
Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada

Thank you for your March, 1979 issue in which you exposed the threat of Humanism to the Christian Church. As a result of your emphasis on this subject, I was able to stop what I now see as a dangerous tool of Satan from coming into our church and influencing our teenagers.

Again, thank you.

Jim Shock
Columbia, SC

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Mar. '76	Youth
April '76	America's Spiritual Heritage
May '76	Cleaning Up Our Finances
June '76	Yielding to Change
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Mar. '78	Overcoming Fear
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