

B. KIND WORDS

There is always a way to be honest without being brutal.

De Angelis

A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes *[her]* spirit.

Prov 15.4

Rate yourself.

How hard is it to speak kind words at tense moments?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding
- other _____ [write it]



I appreciate Robert Fisher's reminder that the use of tact is always welcomed but it is especially necessary when speaking "a truth that may strike a sensitive nerve in another."

In our marriages, opportunities to say something irritating, occur more regularly simply because we spend so much time together. None of us likes to have someone examine every word spoken in the kitchen. Walking on eggshells in any relationship would be exhausting. The only solution is to determine to speak to others the way we would like them to speak to us.

Kind words don't cost much and don't take much exertion at all if they spill out of a kind heart. If couples listen to themselves they would realize that sometimes they sound like people who don't even like each other. Rather than putting their own nastiness under the searchlight, they take aim at each others' unkind words then twist the tension spring even tighter. Sometimes the kindest word in all the world is the unkind word that went unsaid.



One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Using kind words is a decision.
- ◇ If you must speak ill of another, do not speak it. Write it in the sand near the water's edge.
- ◇ Words can cause bruises that are exceedingly slow to heal.

Napoleon Hill

Jesus' little brother, James, said that no man can tame his tongue. The clear implication is that only with God's strength can we hope to have victory.

Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things.

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

James 3.3-12 NASB

In each of the first four chapters of James' book he reminds his former church members of some of the things he must have preached about while they still attended his church in Jerusalem. Fire! Hell! Tongues! Horse bridles! Shipwrecks!

He describes the destructive power of our words. “The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity. . .and is set on fire by hell!” Then he declares, “No one can tame the tongue!” If that be true, it evidently takes divine help to control the words we speak. I think of this in two aspects.

Aspect #1—HARD WORK We must practice depending intentionally on the Holy Spirit to help us choose our words. Remember David’s encouragement, “Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, my Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” [Psalm 19.14] We both know this takes a lot of effort.

There are those of us who take great pride in speaking our mind. We admire our own honesty and willingness to “tell it like it is.” Sometimes we consider openness a noble quality [even when it hurts others’ feelings]. We like to give advice the same way we like to receive it—straight from the shoulder. We make the mistake that our spouses want us to be forthright and candid. I suppose, like me, you often ignore two of Paul’s admonitions to “speak the truth in love” and “let your words be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” [Ephesians 4.15 & Colossians 4.6]

Aspect #2 WORK ON AUTO PILOT Taming the tongue requires that we spend much time intentionally speaking kindly. The plan is that it becomes second nature to honor the Lord with our words.

I competed on wrestling teams from junior high through college. Every time we learned a new “move” we ran endless drills: Step one—plant your feet. Step two—move to the left. Step three—lower your left shoulder. Step four—drive with lightening speed! Develop the habit. Form a pattern. Perfect a repetition. Etch the motions in your instinct. Train your muscles to move unencumbered.

Eventually the concentration level evolved into an automatic response. We could focus on the opponent rather than on the moves we had to make. Some have called this secondary passive concentration. But if we will devote ourselves earnestly to honoring God with our words for a long, long time, we will be pleased to see how much He is pleased to see our progress.

A hundred fifty years ago William Makepeace Thackeray uttered a simple slice of advice for couples, “Never lose a chance of saying a kind word.” And do you remember Mark Twain’s take on being nice? “Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

Jesus probably spoke to every sort of person you and I have ever met. In three solid years of constant exposure to individuals and crowds, He never sinned with His lips. He was kind. Some words were strong and some were gentle. He lifted the hurting. Encouraged the discouraged. Corrected the confused. And even hammered the proud, “...yet without sin.” [Heb 4.15] He was tempted to respond in bitterness. They taunted Him to riposte in anger. His enemies baited Him. His friends behavior was baffling. His allies betrayed and denied Him. Yet He didn’t open His mouth in retaliation. He dumbfounded His assailants with silence, with wisdom, with soft answers, with Scripture, and with genuine humility. Yes, He did embarrass the Pharisees from time to time as He frowned on their hypocrisy, but we know two Pharisees by name who sought Him out and became believers: Nicodemus & Joseph. [John 3.1 & Mk 15.42]



One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ If it is not true, do not say it. *Marcus Aurelius 2nd Cent BC, Rome*
- ◇ Make it easy for your mate to say “I’m sorry.” or “I’ll work on that.” or “Will you forgive me?” Don’t make her grovel.
- ◇ We have all felt the sting of unkind words [for scowls, or raised eyebrows, or a shrug of the shoulders].

Ephesians 4.29 “Let no unwholesome [rotten] word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification...so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

Calling names is mean. Even calling someone “mean” is mean. After a stinging insult, a husband sent a verbal retort designed to lacerate. It came as a missile from a smelter in hell. He followed it immediately with a weak, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that.” I believe he lied just then. He meant what he said, but he didn’t mean to say it aloud.

We’ve all read universal adages about unkind words. Everybody, I mean everybody, has to work on this.

- If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.
- When angry, count to ten before you speak.
- Be slow to speak, slow to wrath. James 1.19
- As perfume to the flower, so kindness is to speech.

all American mothers say this
European folk saying
first century Israel
Germany

STOP!

Decision Time

Choose just one for this week's Homework.

- I will write myself a reminder to apologize when I interrupt.
- Before you speak in anger count to nine. When very angry say the alphabet.
- Promise yourself to stop nagging about _____
- I will not call names.
- "If you can't be kind, at least be vague." *Judith Martin*
- "We must eliminate nagging." *Robert Fisher*
- By our own admission we do not always speak as nicely as we want others to speak to us. But let's decide that we will try to fill our cups with sweet water.
- If you can recall an unkind word you recently uttered, decide not to say it again.

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

Speak the truth in love. . .let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth. . .
be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

Ephesians 4.25,29,32

"A cup, brimful of sweet water
cannot spill even one drop of bitter water."

Amy Carmichael, IE.