

**2.16.20 – The Power of Words**

Scripture:

But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another. *Colossians 3:8-9a*

Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. *James 1:19*

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other ... And be thankful. *Colossians 3:12-13, 15b*

**“Love covers all offenses”**

**MONDAY 2.17.20 Proverbs 10:6-12**

With so many focused books and resources, we sometimes begin to think that marriage and family life is a unique, specialized field. In some ways, perhaps—yet the Bible often reminds us that the values that guide all healthy interactions apply, if anything, more strongly to our families. The principles in these seven Hebrew proverbs speak clearly, if not specifically, to family life.

- Verses 6-11 all contrast people who are honest, trustworthy and upright with those who deceive, who reject wisdom in order to pursue their own ways and who do violence, if not physically then emotionally. In what ways have you felt the difference between marriages and families that embody the “righteous” attitudes and speech listed here with those torn by the “foolish” or “wicked” qualities?
- “Love covers all offenses” in verse 12 used the same Hebrew word as verse 11’s “the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.” Here, said commentator Paul Koptak, it meant “the covering that promotes healed relationships ... Hatred stirs up, love smoothes over. Discord and dissension spring from hatred, but love nurtures harmony.” When has love healed in your life, not by ignoring a problem, but by being the glue that points beyond the problem to an essential connection worth preserving?

**Prayer:** God of love, make me wise and righteous in the best and broadest sense of those words. Give me a heart from which flow words that honestly help and heal in the lives of those I love most. Amen.

**“The perfect bond of unity”**

**TUESDAY 2.18.20 Colossians 3:12-14**

The apostle Paul trained to be a rabbi (cf. Acts 22:3). It’s no surprise that, after he became an itinerant Christian preacher, he taught his Gentile converts the principles of speech and

relationships found in Proverbs. But he added a powerful additional motive to his teaching: Jesus' example. "As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other," he wrote.

- Paul called all of Christ's followers to show five qualities: "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." When have you showed those qualities toward someone you love, or has that person showed them toward you? What other responses might you or they have chosen? Would those alternatives have made things better or worse?
- Every week in worship at Resurrection, we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Colossians said, "As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other." How does accepting, down deep inside, that God forgives you transform your approach to forgiving others? What factors make seeing yourself and others as "forgivable" particularly significant in building durable marriage and family relationships?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, please keep shaping me into a person of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Give me the grace to forgive as you've forgiven me. Amen.

**"The peace of Christ must control your hearts"**

**WEDNESDAY 2.19.20 Colossians 3:15-17**

Paul went on to tell the Colossian Christians, "The peace of Christ must control your hearts." He wrote that to people who lived in a world at least as cruel and unsettling as ours, perhaps more so. Not only that—that Greco-Roman world often turned its hatred, violence and scorn particularly on its Christian citizens. Paul's counsel about peace, praise and gratitude was a survival manual for people who lived in a spiritual "combat zone."

- Songwriter Allan Roberts wrote the often-recorded song "You Always Hurt the One You Love." What aspects of your history and temperament make "the peace of Christ" particularly important for you in your closest relationships? *The Message* renders verse 16, "Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house." How can you live that out?
- Verse 17 took in a lot of ground: "WHATEVER you do, whether in speech or action, do it ALL in the name of the Lord Jesus." What does it mean to you to do whatever you do in Jesus' name? How can you work, shop, drive the freeway, react to today's news, cheer for the Royals or your kid's soccer team or discuss the family budget and future holiday plans "in the name of the Lord Jesus"?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to see reasons to say "thank you" no matter what comes my way today. Let your peace more and more control my heart and my words. Amen.

**Guidelines for family living**

**THURSDAY 2.20.20 Colossians 3:18-21**

Too often, both men and women get stuck on verse 18, one of the most often misinterpreted and abused verses Paul ever wrote. We get a clearer sense of what he meant from a parallel in Ephesians 5:21, where he said "Submit to one another" before specifically speaking to wives and husbands. Verses 19 and 21 may sound mundane to us, but were revolutionary in a world where most pagan moralists lectured women and children on how to behave, with no related duties for husbands and parents.

- Paul's command to husbands was "Husbands, love your wives and don't be harsh with them." In the Bible, "love" referred to a chosen set of attitudes and actions, not just an

emotional state. How does this show that Paul did not intend to “let husbands off easy”? (In Ephesians 5:25, he got even more explicit: “Husbands, love your wives just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.”) In what ways have you seen mutual submission strengthen loving relationships?

- In Paul’s day, the Greek, Roman and Hebrew legal codes all gave parents virtually unlimited power over their children. How did Paul’s vision of family life lived under God’s principles emphasize mutual respect and caring, rather than a one-sided, tyrannical relationship? How can you, as a parent or a child, live out the principles of verses 20-21?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, you came in Jesus to win my heart, not to harshly order me around. Help me learn from you how to live that way in all of the relationships that matter most to me. Amen.

### **“The wisdom from above”**

#### **FRIDAY 2.21.20 James 3:14-17**

James devoted a good part of his letter to the effects, positive and negative, of our speech and the inner sources from which that speech springs. He noted that “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition” can wreck any relationship, including those in a family. But he was equally convinced that true wisdom comes “from above,” and that divine wisdom will surely shape our souls in ways that create peaceful, generous living.

- Scholar William Barclay noted, “There is a kind of person who is undoubtedly clever, with acute brain and skilful tongue; but his effect, nevertheless, in ... any group, is to cause trouble and to disturb personal relationships. It is sobering thing to remember that the wisdom he possesses is devilish rather than divine.” Have you ever known (or been) a person like that? What does it take to turn that kind of intelligence and skill in speech to more positive purposes?
- Barclay also observed that the true wisdom described in verse 17 “at all times brings men closer to one another and to God.” What are some of the daily practices that most help you to remember and internalize “the wisdom from above”? In what ways can you sense that wisdom reshaping your life and relationships for the better?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, too many times already my own wisdom has let me down, and hurt me and people I love. Keep sending me your wisdom from above, and keep me receptive and open to it. Amen.

### **“Don’t let the sun set on your anger”**

#### **SATURDAY 2.22.20 Ephesians 4:25-32; Psalm 19:9-14**

We’re encouraging each of us to pray daily during this sermon series, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” So we might expect the theme passage in Ephesians to say, “Never get angry.” Instead we find that it said, “Be angry without sinning.” Then, as though realizing that “be angry without sinning” might be just a bit vague (“How do I do that?”), Paul added this timeless relational advice: “Don’t let the sun set on your anger,” or, as *The Message* puts it, “Don’t go to bed angry.”

- Anger, in itself, is not bad—it is one of four basic human emotions. We can be angry without sinning. Ephesians also connected the topic of anger with teaching about honesty.

When have you seen a failure to honestly face anger (your own or someone else's) be destructive to a relationship? Anger becomes risky when we let it fester and don't deal with it directly. One counselor said, "Bitterness is anger grown stale." How good are you at recognizing your own anger, and then promptly dealing constructively and honestly with it?

**Prayer:** Dear God, give me the courage to speak truth in love, the humility to say I'm sorry when I'm wrong and the heart to forgive others who admit a wrong. Amen.

**Family Activity:** Read Ephesians 4:29. As a family, discuss the meaning of this verse.

Create a list of positive, encouraging words. After you have exhausted your thoughts, check additional sources such as the computer or the Bible for additional words to add to your list.

Next, play a game of Scrabble (or Scrabble Junior) with your family. Play by the rules on the box but add one more rule. Agree to use only positive or neutral words. If someone uses one of the encouraging words from your family's list, he or she can receive bonus points! (Decide how many ahead of time.) Pray and ask God to help you speak only positive, kind and encouraging words to and about others.

*This study was adapted from The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.*