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Pause Ponder Profit

Speaking The Truth In Love

By Gene Lyles

Just what does it mean to speak the truth in love? There are various concepts of what it means. To some it means to never say anything that might offend. To others it means to hide the truth in generalities, that is, don't be plain and forthright. Still others think it means to always speak in a soft and gentle tone: never sound stern. But as we look into the Scriptures, we do not find these concepts. Let us now examine each concept, using Jesus as our perfect example.

Must we refrain from speaking offensively? In Matthew 15:7-9, Jesus spoke very offensively to the Scribes and Pharisees. They were very offended (Mat. 15:12). Yet Jesus did not apologize (Mat. 15:13-14). In Matthew, chapter 23, Jesus very offensively rebuked the scribes and Pharisees by some of the most cutting language ever spoken. Who would deny that Jesus spoke the truth in love by such offensive language? Some today seem to think they are more loving than Jesus because they condemn this sort of speech.

Must we seek to hide the truth in generalities? As Jesus taught in the temple. He plainly told the Pharisees that if

they did not believe He was sent from the Father, they would die in their sins (John 8:12-24). There were no generalities in His language here. As He continued His speech, He made it clear that believers must continue in His word in order to be free (John 8:30-32). This further provoked the Jewish rulers, and a discourse followed. By the clearest words that mouth can utter, Jesus declared them to be of their father the devil (John 8:40-44). If a person sees generalities in the speech of Jesus, he has indeed closed his eyes.

Must we speak in soft and gentle tones? In the examples given above, it would be difficult to imagine Jesus speaking in a soft and gentle tone to those He so sharply rebuked. But as we observe Jesus on other occasions, we find that His speech had to have the tone of sternness to convey the intended impression. For instance, when He drove the money changers from the temple with a scourge in His hand (John 2:13-16), did He speak to them in a soft and gentle tone? When He healed the man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-7), was it a soft and gentle tone that caused the Pharisees and Herodians to plot to destroy Him?

As we see people today so indifferent toward God's word; as we see children so disrespectful toward their parents and teachers; as we see the oncoming generation so disrespectful toward law and order, could it be that these **false concepts of love** might be a contributing factor? Let us not forget that our Lord set a perfect example for us to follow. Is He not our Creator? As our Creator, does He not know better than we the true meaning of **speaking the truth in love**? True love is telling people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. This is what Jesus did.

Via The Preceptor—August 2004



A Portrait Of The Hypocrite

By James A. Brown

The word *hypocrite* is based on the Greek theatrical term that means “actor” or “to play a part”. Therefore the basic disposition of the hypocrite is to pretend to be somebody or something he is not. In the New Testament the hypocrite is shown to be the shining example of religious piety while lacking genuine spiritual virtue.

Since the preaching of Christ, the Pharisee has been the standard portrait of the hypocrite. In His stern condemnation of the Pharisee, Jesus paints, for us, the picture of the hypocrite. The hypocrite honors God with his lips, but his heart is far from God (Mk. 7:6). When the hypocrite does a charitable deed, he is showy, flashy, or flamboyant with the intent that people will see and then praise him (Matt. 6:2). He prays in very public places in order to be seen by men so as to appear reverent and pious (Matt. 6:5). When fasting, the hypocrite puts on a sad or gloomy face so as to show others he is fasting. He wants others to see his display of piety so as to gain their admiration. He does not do it for the glory of God, but as a means of seeking self-glory (Matt. 6:16). The hypocrite is self-righteous. He will hide his real beliefs or intentions through misleading speech or behavior (Matt. 23:29-30). Yes, truly the conduct of the hypocrite appears righteous, but his heart is full of hypocrisy and lawlessness — aptly represented by the rot and decay within a whitewashed tomb (Matt. 23:27-28).

The hypocrite may benefit in this life by his lies and his hypocrisy. He may dupe men; he may elevate himself in their opinion; he may obtain worldly advantage from having secured their approval. But what will he have to look forward to in the end? In Job 27:8, the rhetorical question is asked: “For what is the hope of the hypocrite,

though he may gain much, if God takes away his life?” The question reminds us of the words of the Lord, “*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Mk. 8:36-37).

The Bridle

By James A. Brown

Did you know that the bridle is used in the Bible primarily as a symbol of restraint and control? Job used it this way in Job 30:11. When he said that the afflictions he had received from God had led to his enemies’ throwing off restraint, (NIV), (lit., “letting loose the bridle” — KJV), and attacking him. Job also tells us that an indicator of the strength of leviathan is that he cannot be subjected to such restraint, for Job asks, “Who can approach him with a double bridle?” (Job. 41:13).

Exercising self-restraint, especially over the tongue, is associated with the bridle in a number of places (Psa. 39:1; James 1:26; 3:2-3). Without such self-restraint — self-control, a person deceives himself and his religion is worthless (James 1:26). The contrast between those able to exercise such restraint over themselves and the horse and mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by the bit and bridle is pointed out in Psalm 32:9. “*Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*”

Being able to exercise temperance, i.e., hold ourselves in check, restrain ourselves, exercise self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), and a characteristic of a godly person.



Why Another Hermeneutic?

Jim R. Everett

There are reasons for which people do things -- few of man's actions are ever meaningless or random. The reason many churches of Christ today are so different from what they were 50-60 years ago is not by accident. Some churches of Christ have women preachers and women elders. Many congregations are involved in all kinds of social and entertainment activities. In order to break down barriers between churches of Christ and denominations, gospel preachers are exchanging pulpits with denominational preachers. It has even been suggested that we should apologize to denominational people for saying they are not saved and we should accept every religious person who believes in Jesus. Whether or not they have been baptized for the remission of sins is insignificant. In more recent times, instrumental music has been introduced into worship. And, the latest digressive development is taking the Lord's Supper on Saturday night.

In view of such plain Biblical teaching, how can those claiming to be churches of Christ defend women preachers and elders? It appears to most people to be as plain "as the nose on your face" -- "But I suffer not a woman to teach nor usurp authority over a man..." (1 Timothy 2:11-12). When giving qualifications for elders, Paul and says a bishop is to be the "the husband of one wife" (2 Timothy 3:1, 2). If you accept the fact that language is to be interpreted in harmony with its original intent, then women preachers and women elders are unscriptural. However, if one changes his hermeneutic, he convinces himself that the passages really do not mean what they say.

Jack Cottrell, in his book "Feminism and the Bible," makes a distinction between the "liberal Christian feminist" and the "Biblical feminist"

The "liberal Christian feminists" looks at the Bible with the presupposition that women are oppressed and the Bible is androcentric and patriarchal. Since men wrote it, it was designed to control women and exalt man. The message of the Bible, then, to a "liberal Christian feminist," must be filtered through her experiences as a woman who is enslaved by men. That means that in order to understand the Bible's message for women, more emphasis is to be placed on the interpretation end than the original message of the writer. That makes their process of interpreting the Bible entirely subjective.

On the other hand "Biblical feminists," who are more conservative in their approach to the Bible's message, still cling to a kind of faith in scriptures. Their hermeneutic distinguishes between what is called "descriptive" or "prescriptive." "Descriptive" means that passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 3:1-2, merely describe what was true in the first century but are not "prescriptive;" that is, the teaching is not required behavior for modern women.

The need for another hermeneutic among a great number of modernistic churches of Christ was required by liberal minded preachers and elders who found themselves restrained by a hermeneutic of "book, chapter and verse; command, example and necessary implication." Interpreting the Bible by following those rules, meant they could not practice what they wanted to practice. They could not really justify what they were doing by that kind of hermeneutic, because they actually found themselves condemned by their unauthorized behavior. Their dilemma necessitated that they either abandon the practices or change the hermeneutic -- they liked their practices, so they invented another hermeneutic that fit their practices. It makes perfect sense to those in modernistic churches of Christ to do whatever needs to be done to build big churches

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and to address the social needs of man, because the hermeneutic they use is entirely different from the way you and I interpret it. The major flaw of their hermeneutic is that, while it mouths faith in the scriptures, it shows disrespect for the absolute authority of Christ revealed in NT scriptures.

Dangerous Thinking

Perry N. Hall

Paul thought he was doing God's will when he was rejecting Christ, persecuting Christians, and making havoc of the church (Acts 26:9; 1 Tim. 1:13). There are many today who shut out the light of God and think "within themselves," and reach the same conclusions Paul did.

There are many others who put themselves in this class of thinkers when they think that all that is necessary to be a Christian is to live a moral life, go by their own conscience, and "join the church of their choice." The way a man thinks is often his greatest hindrance. The Lord has said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts . . ."

Neither is sincerity a substitute for doing God's will. The way a person feels is no evidence of acceptance with God. Paul felt fine when he was helping to murder Christian men and women. Thinking he was right never made anybody right. We must be guided only by God's word. We must think only the thoughts of God. Only then will we be safe from dangerous thinking.



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