

Preachers Must Avoid the Dirty Dozen

By Daniel Ruegg

There are some things that intelligent people around the world resent as cheap and dishonest. While these deceitful things are common in practice, honorable men despise them and seek to avoid them. Gospel preachers above all others should eschew these practices and always avoid them.

Sophistry is the use of deceptively subtle reasoning or argumentation. It is to use adroit, subtle reasoning that is specious and fallacious. Those resorting to sophistry seek to deceive their hearers by pretending to be brilliant and wise above them. We must speak the truth and lie not (1Tim. 2:7).

Nit-picking describes the person who picks at small, insignificant points in another person's life, work, or speech hoping to find something to discredit them. He overlooks all the good in hope of finding at least one point he can criticize, no matter how small.

Caviling is to raise trivial objections to that which others say, do or propose. When a dishonest soul cannot show good reasons why a proposition should be rejected, he will resort to caviling.

Railing is to revile, or scold in harsh, insolent or abusive language. In a discussion or argument, when all else fails the railer raises his voice and attacks his opponent with harsh, abusive language. We are bound to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

Haggle means to annoy or exhaust with wrangling. There are some who can never accept defeat. Even if proven wrong, they will still argue and refuse to yield. False pride leads many into haggling about a lost point. Honesty demands that we acknowledge the fact if our adversary proves us wrong (1John 1:8-9).

Rhetoric is normally a good word, but sometimes means "insincere or grandiloquent language." Sometimes when a man has nothing to say, or a weak argument, he attempts to hide that fact by the use of big words, flowery or technical terminology hoping his audience will not recognize the poverty of his reasoning.

Spinning is a relatively new term used to describe what politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists do when they want to make error look good or truth look bad. This modern definition has not yet made it into my Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, but we hear it almost daily in news broadcasts. In days past this practice was called lying. Now it is accepted as the way to cloud embarrassing information or to downplay the success of your opponent. A new professional group has emerged who are identified as spin-meisters whose job it is to deceive the gullible public. Isaiah said, "Woe to them that call evil good and good evil" (Isa. 5:20).

Illogical is a state or condition that prevails when we do not observe the principles of logic, when our communication or reasoning is senseless. No teacher will be taken seriously who is illogical or irrational in his teaching.

Shallow describes the man lacking intellectual depth. He is superficial in his knowledge, his reasoning and approach. The man of God must study, i.e., give diligence to show himself approved unto God (2Tim. 2:15). Our sermons, our classes, our reasoning with false teachers must never be shallow. Diligent study keeps one from shallowness.

Egotistical describes the person who takes himself too seriously. He or she overestimates their beauty, their intellectual attainments, their brilliance, their worth, their talent, their greatness. This vice all preachers must studiously avoid. It is one evil fruit of false pride which God hates (Prov. 8:13).

Carping is fault-finding. No matter how good the other person may be, no matter how correct his conduct, no matter how civil his speech, the carper will not rest until he has found some fault. He manifests the same attitude when someone else has a project or a proposal. He cannot bear to see another's success, thus is driven to find some fault, be it real or imagined.

Blustering describes a man whose speech is boastful and loud but without meaningful content. Paul said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. That ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6).

Pompous suggests a sense of self-importance, one who is excessively elevated or ornate or showy. We are warned not to think more highly of our selves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

These are thirteen vices to avoid, a baker's dozen. Let us never forget Paul's exhortation: Foolish talking and jesting which are not befitting, let it not even be named among you as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3-4).

"Where Should I Study?"

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

A young man who wanted to become a lawyer wrote to Abraham Lincoln, asking where and with whom he should read books. Mr. Lincoln replied: "My dearest Sir: I have just reached home and found your letter. If you are resolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself, the thing is more than half done already. It is but a small matter whether you read with anybody or not. I did not read with anyone. Get the books and read and study them till you understand them in their principal features, and that is the main thing. It is of no consequence to be in a large town while you are reading. I read at New Salem, which never had three hundred people living in it. The books, and your capacity for understanding them, are just the same in all places. Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing." (From Abraham Lincoln)

Let us individually read and study the word of God so that we can understand it in its principal features, and let us resolutely determine to obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

A Moments Wisdom

- This is the early punishment of the liar: he is not believed, even when he speaks the truth.
- A child tells in the street what mother and father say indoors.
- Forget others' faults by remembering your own.
- Bad men excuse their own sins; good men forsake them.
- A sin denied is twice committed.
- Who seeks a faultless friend remains friendless.
- To worry about tomorrow is to be unhappy today.
- One generation plants the trees; the next generation gets the shade.
- Fear can carry a man farther than courage, but not in the same direction.
- A foolish man is known by six things: 1) anger without cause, 2) speech without profit, 3) change without progress, 4) questions without purpose, 5) placing trust in strangers, and 6) mistaking foes for friends.