

Cleaning Up the Verbal Environment

Pollution takes many forms, but one type is often overlooked; “verbal pollution,” passed around by grumblers, complainers, and criticizers. The poison of pessimism creates an atmosphere of wholesale negativism where nothing but the bad side of everything is emphasized.

A group of Christians became concerned about this form of pollution and their personal part in it. So they made an agreement to avoid critical words for a whole week. They were surprised to find how little they spoke! As they continued the experiment, they actually had to relearn conversation skills.

In Ephesians 4, Paul called believers to that sort of decisive action. He said we are to “put off” the old self and its conduct that grieves the Holy Spirit (vv.22, 30) and “put on” the new self that builds up others (v.24). If we want to be rid of verbal pollution, we must choose to change and ask for God’s help. It’s a great way to start cleaning up our spiritual environment. Help stamp out pollution—clean up your speech. (J. Yoder)

Contaminated Milk

In recent years, it was discovered that some milk producers in China had been diluting cow’s milk and adding the industrial chemical Melamine. This chemical was added because it artificially enhanced protein readings. Several infants died and others became seriously ill. Such adulteration is not new. Other countries have been adding Melamine to animal feed for at least 40 years for the same purpose, resulting in the death of animals.

Another kind of adulteration is when people add to God’s Word, “the pure milk of the Word” as Peter described it (1Peter 2:2). The word pure means “unadulterated” or “uncontaminated.” The early church had to deal with those who considered circumcision necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). That idea was rejected because it was not in accordance with the Word of God. Peter encouraged his brethren in the Lord: “Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples? We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved” (Acts 15:10-11). Examine carefully any teaching that asks you to do anything more than what is in God’s Word. Otherwise it can be deadly to your spiritual well-being.

Credit Repair

An advertisement for a credit repair service states, “Credit repair isn’t something you can buy; it’s something you have to work for.” The same principle applies to the credibility of our lives. We can’t buy it; it’s something we have to work for. We may be able to “borrow” credibility for a while by associating ourselves with credible people, but sooner or later we will need our own.

Credibility has to do with the ability to elicit belief. The reason it’s essential for Christians is that our lives affect God’s reputation (1Peter 2:12). When we call ourselves by Christ’s name, His reputation is tied to ours. If people have reason not to believe us, they may not believe God. The way to earn credibility is to live honorably. Then others will believe and glorify God. (J.A. Link)

Greater Credit

On May 29, 1953, New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay, became the first people to reach the peak of Mount Everest, the highest mountain in

the world. Since Tenzing did not know how to use the camera, Edmund took a photo of Tenzing as evidence that they did reach the top. Later, journalists repeatedly asked who had reached the summit first. The expedition leader, John Hunt, replied, "They reached it together, as a team." They were united by a common goal, and neither was concerned who should get the greater credit.

It is counterproductive to try to determine who deserves the most credit when something is done well. The church at Corinth was split into two factions—those who followed Paul, and those who followed Apollos. The apostle Paul told them, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase. Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters" (1Cor. 3:7). He reminded them that they were "God's fellow workers" (v.9), and it is God who gives the increase in ministry (v.7). Our concern about who deserves the credit serves only to take away the honor and glory that belong to the Lord Jesus alone. Jesus must increase; I must decrease. (C. P. Hia)

God's Fences

In all the years as a preacher, I've yet to meet someone whose life was all messed up because he or she kept God's commands. Yet, in a day when personal freedom is celebrated as an inalienable right, talk of conforming our lifestyle to God's way is often viewed as an imposition. And anyone who speaks out in favor of God's boundaries is ruled out of bounds. But in this frenzy to be free, it should not go unnoticed that our society is increasingly marked with a haunting sense of meaninglessness and despair.

God's people should have a distinctly different view of boundaries. Like the psalmist, we must realize that a blessed life comes from delighting in the law of the Lord (Psalm 1:2), not in living like those who "walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take" (v.1). A believer in Jesus will recognize that God's boundaries are not meant to take the pizzazz out of life. Instead, they are divine fences constructed with God's wisdom to help us avoid the treachery and trouble of reckless living. Next time you are tempted to break through God's boundaries, remember His loving purpose in putting up fences. Choose to bless God for the boundaries and for the way they bless you. God's fences keep you within the bounds of His blessings.

"Hey Stupid!"

When Arthur was a child, someone close to him thought they could motivate him to do better by frequently asking him, "Why are you so stupid?" He didn't know how much this affected him until he was a twenty-something and heard someone behind him say, "Stupid!" Upon hearing the word, he quickly turned around, thinking someone was talking to him.

Knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord helps us to realize that because God created me in His image (Gen. 1:27), we're not stupid but "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). God declares that all He has made is "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and the Psalms remind us that we are "skillfully wrought" (Ps. 139:15).

The psalmist David describes how God knows each one of us intimately: "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways" (vv.1-3). Not only are we wonderfully made, but because of Christ's death on the cross, we can also be wonderfully restored to a right relationship with God. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation... All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2Cor. 5:17-18). Each person is a unique expression of God's loving design.