

## Kind Words Smooth and Quiet

On November 19, 1863, two well-known men gave speeches at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The featured speaker, Edward Everett, was a former congressman, governor, and president of Harvard University. Considered one of the greatest orators of his day, Mr. Everett delivered a formal address lasting two hours. He was followed by President Abraham Lincoln, whose speech lasted two minutes. Lincoln had been ill for two days, and upon his return to Washington, was diagnosed with smallpox. This did not deter him from delivering what may be the greatest speech of any American statesman.

Today, Lincoln's speech, the Gettysburg Address, is widely known and quoted, while Everett's words have almost been forgotten. It is not just Lincoln's eloquent brevity that accounts for this. On that occasion, his words touched the wounded spirit of a nation fractured by civil war, offering resolve in the present struggle and hope for the days to come.

Words do not have to be many to be meaningful. What we commonly call the Lord's Prayer is numbered among the shortest and most memorable of all the teachings of Jesus. It brings help and healing as it reminds us that God is our heavenly Father whose power is at work on earth, just as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:9-10). He provides food, forgiveness and fortitude for each day (vv.11-13). All honor and glory belong to Him (v.13). There is nothing in our past, present, and future that is not included in our Lord's brief words that help and heal. Kind words, smooth and quiet, comfort the hearer.

## Enormously Gorgeous

"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31:30-31).

The following was written by a 12-year-old girl, and well illustrates that judging by appearance is instilled in the hearts of people from a very early age.

"To be enormously gorgeous, Sarah says you need to have beautiful, long, curly hair like she has. I don't. To be enormously gorgeous, Justin says you must have perfectly straight white teeth like he has. I don't. To be enormously gorgeous, Jessica says you can't have any of those little brown dots on your face called freckles. I do. To be enormously gorgeous, Mark says you have to be the smartest kid in the seventh-grade class. I'm not. To be enormously gorgeous, Stephen says you have to be able to tell the funniest jokes in the school. I'm not. To be enormously gorgeous, Lauren says you need to live in the nicest neighborhood in town and in the prettiest house. I don't. To be enormously gorgeous, Matthew says you can only wear the coolest clothes and the most popular shoes. I don't. To be enormously gorgeous, Samantha says you need to come from a perfect family. I don't. But every night at bedtime my dad gives me a big hug and says, 'You are enormously gorgeous, and I love you.' My dad must know something my friends don't."

## Losing Patience

A 2006 survey of more than 1,000 adults discovered that most people take an average of 17 minutes to lose their patience while waiting in line. Also, most people lose their patience in only nine minutes while on hold on the phone. Impatience is a common trait.

James wrote to a group of believers who were struggling with being patient for Jesus' return (James 5:7). They were living under exploitation and distressing times, and James encouraged them to set the timer on their temper for the long run. Challenging these believers to persevere under suffering, he tried to stimulate them to stand firm and to live sacrificially until

the Lord returned to right every wrong. He wrote: "Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (v.8).

James called them to be like the farmer who waits patiently for the rain and the harvest (v.7) and to be like the prophets and the patriarch Job who demonstrated perseverance in difficulties (vv.10-11). The finish line was just ahead, and James encouraged the believers not to give up.

When we are being tried in a crucible of distress, God desires to help us continue living by faith and by trusting in His compassion and mercy (v.11). The way to great patience is often through great trials.

### **In the End**

An Australian study concluded that plainer cigarette packages would make smoking less appealing to teens. In response, the Australian government introduced legislation that would require tobacco companies to replace color, logos, and promotional text on cigarette packages with health warnings and images of diseased lungs. In effect, the Marlboro Man would give way to the Grim Reaper in an effort to reduce the number of deaths caused by smoking. But cigarette packaging isn't the only thing that may be tempting on the outside with a toxic product inside.

The Old Testament book of Proverbs urges us to carefully consider the long-term results of all our choices. The recurring phrase "in the end" (Prov. 5:4, 25:8, 29:21) is a warning to look down the road and ask if what we're attracted to will ultimately lead to joy or sorrow, honor or disgrace, life or death. "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright" (2:6-7).

The key to avoiding the tragic results of foolish choices is embracing God's wisdom as our guide through life. "Then [we] will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path" (v.9). Wisdom is understanding what's really important.

### **Nine Requirements for Contented Living**

- 1) Health enough to make work a pleasure
  - 2) Wealth enough to support your needs
  - 3) Strength to battle with difficulties and overcome them
  - 4) Humility enough to confess and forsake your sins
  - 5) Patience enough to toil until some good is accomplished
  - 6) Charity enough to see some good in your neighbor
  - 7) Love enough to move you to be helpful to others
  - 8) Faith enough to make real the things of God
  - 9) Hope enough to remove all anxious fears of the future
- (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

### **A Moments Wisdom**

--Life is too short on this earth to fail to believe God and act like He does not exist. Take care of your life, and the Lord will take care of your death.

--We are far more liable to catch the vices than the virtues of our associates.

--It is the trouble that never comes that causes the loss of sleep.

--Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right path, the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.

--Adversity reveals genius; prosperity tends to hide it.