

# Life's Little Lessons II

## Un-Mailed Letters

Former US President Harry Truman had a rule: Any letters written in anger had to sit on his desk for 24 hours before they could be mailed. If at the end of that “cooling off” period, he still felt the same sentiments, he would send the letter. By the end of his life, Truman’s un-mailed letters filled a large desk drawer.

How often in this age of immediate communication would even 24 minutes of wise restraint spare us embarrassment! In his epistle, James addressed a universal theme in human history when he wrote about the damage an uncontrolled tongue can bring. “No man can tame the tongue,” he wrote. “It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (3:8).

When we’re gossiping or speaking in anger, we find ourselves outside the lines of what God desires. Our tongues, our pens, and even our keyboards should more often fall silent with thanks in our hearts for the restraint God provides. All too often, when we speak we remind everyone of our brokenness as human beings. When we want to surprise others with the difference Christ makes, we may need to look no further than restraining our tongue. Others can’t help but notice when we honor God with what we say—or don’t say. “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23).

## Man’s New “Best Friend”

Martin Lindstrom, an author and speaker, thinks that cellphones have become akin to a best friend for many owners. Lindstrom’s experiment using an MRI helped him discover why. When the subjects saw or heard their phone ringing, their brains fired off neurons in the area associated with feelings of love and compassion. Lindstrom said, “It was as if they were in the presence of a girlfriend, boyfriend, or family member.”

Many things vie for our affection and time and attention, and it seems we frequently need to evaluate where we are focusing our love. Joshua told the people of Israel that they were to give their affection and worship to God alone (Josh. 24:14). This was significant in contrast to the idols worshiped by the nations around them. These idols were made of wood and metal and were only the work of men’s hands (Ps. 115:4). They were totally powerless compared to the Lord. Therefore, God’s people were exhorted to find their security in Him and not in other gods (Judg. 10:13-16). Jesus reiterated this in His discussion of the commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). The Lord alone is our help and shield (Ps. 115:9). May we reserve our worship for Him.

## The World Doesn’t Revolve Around Me

Recently, I had what for me was a “Copernican moment”: I am not at the center of the universe. The world doesn’t revolve around me. It doesn’t move at my pace, in my terms, nor in accord with my preferences.

Though we might wish it to be otherwise, life is not all about us. Everything revolves around the Lord. In Psalm 33, we read that all nature revolves around Him and His control (vv.6-9). He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the ocean in vast reservoirs. Everything in nature operates in accordance with the laws He has set. The nations also revolve around the Lord (vv.10-12). No plan or scheme can stand up against God’s. Ultimately, it is the Lord’s plan that will stand forever. His intentions can never be shaken.

Finally, the lives of all humanity revolve around the Lord (vv.13-19). God sees the whole human race. He made our hearts, and He understands everything we do. And He has the power to intervene in our lives and deliver us from situations spinning out of control. Our life is created to be centered on God, not self. How thankful we can be to serve such a powerful God, who has every aspect of our lives under His control. When we die to all about us, we live to God above us.

## **Follow the Sound**

“Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors” (Psalm 119:24). It isn't easy to make a 40-foot, 45-ton, untrained whale do what you want it to do, even if it's for its own good. That's what well-wishing friends found out when a humpback whale, affectionately named "Humphrey," made a wrong turn during his 1985 migration along the California coast. The wayward mammal became a national celebrity when he turned into San Francisco Bay, swam under the Golden Gate Bridge, and managed to navigate 70 miles up river. For more than 3 weeks Humphrey defied all efforts to get him back to salt water. Finally, marine biologists tried to lure him with the recorded sounds of feeding humpbacks. It worked. Humphrey responded to the "happy humpbacks" and followed "them" back to the Pacific (From Bible Illustrator). Likewise, let us follow the encouraging sounds of the word of God, for they will lead us in the right direction.

## **Won't Take Impressions**

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc. 12:1). “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Cor. 3:18).

“I once saw, lying side by side in a sculptor's workshop, two heads made of metal. One was perfect. All the features of a manly, noble face were clear and distinct. The other, however, had scarcely a single, recognizable human characteristic. It was marred and spoiled. The sculptor said, 'This one is badly distorted because the metal was allowed to cool before it was stamped out, and therefore it wouldn't take the impression’ (From Bible Illustrator).

Likewise, many souls might have been stamped with the likeness of the Savior while they were still warm with the vitality of youth, but they allowed themselves to grow cold through pleasure, sin, and error. Thus, now they are misinformed, hardened, and, in many cases, lost forever.

## **The Making of Drunks and Fools**

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper” (Prov. 23:29-32).

Do you think you will ever see an advertisement like this in your evening paper? “An Ad for Alcohol: Friends and neighbors, I am grateful for your past patronage. I have supplied my store with a fine line of choice liquors. However, I must warn you that my products shall continue to make drunkards, paupers, and beggars. They will incite robbery, fornication, riot, and bloodshed. They will cause physical abuse, hunger, and divorce in many families. They will diminish your comfort, increase your expenses, shorten your life, and multiply fatal accidents and incurable diseases. They will deprive some of life, others of reason, many of character, and all of peace.”

FBI statistics indicate that for every drunk driver arrested there are 82 who don't get caught. There are approximately 27,000 deaths each year related directly, or indirectly, to alcohol.