

Service Committee Matter

Date: August 8, 2012

Matter: [REDACTED]

Topic: Abusive and critical speech

Brothers:

On July 29th, [REDACTED] came to me almost tears and very upset.

On August 7th, [REDACTED] approached me in the same manner.

On August 9, Conversation with [REDACTED].

Reasons why !

- a) In [REDACTED]'s case she was very upset over comments [REDACTED] made in connection with the field service time of her, [REDACTED] & [REDACTED],
- b) In [REDACTED]'s case, he was very upset over comments [REDACTED] made concerning him and myself about our field activity. Also, as a whole, he was very critical of the Brothers not taking the lead they are assigned.
- c) In [REDACTED]'s case, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] made [REDACTED] feel so bad, she felt like crying and ending her field service day early. Evidently, all [REDACTED] [REDACTED] talked about was the failure of Brothers to show up and take the lead for morning activity. He also made her feel like she was a source of discouragement to the Pioneers, not supporting them. [REDACTED] mentioned to her husband that she did not want to work with [REDACTED] again { be alone with him in the car } unless her husband was there.

My concern:

- a) Left unchecked, [REDACTED] could very well ruin the joy of the ministry for some.
- b) Left unchecked, he could very well rob the friends of Jehovah's spirit upon the field activity on any given day the friends are out.
- c) If not handled, this could create problems within the congregation in relation to other friends activity.
- d) This could also affect his wife, [REDACTED] although she is not a part of this issue.

This is not the first time [REDACTED] has been critical of some of the activity in the field. If memory serves me correctly, [REDACTED] & I had problems with him in this area in the past.

Hopeful solution to this problem.

Seeing where this is a field service issue, the Service Committee needs to sit down with him to stress the importance of his speech being positive & upbuilding when out in the service.

Researched articles:

a) Sept. 1, 1999 w.t. page 11 paragraph # 11 Control of speech

avoiding sarcastic, disrespectful speech. Interestingly, the English word "sarcasm" is derived from a Greek verb that literally means "to tear flesh like dogs." (Compare Galatians 5:15.) Just as a dog's teeth can tear flesh off a bone, sarcastic "humor" can strip others of their dignity. But Colossians 3:8 exhorts you to "put them all away from you, wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk out of your mouth." And Proverbs 10:19 states: "In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly." If someone insults you, have the self-control to 'turn the other cheek,' perhaps calmly and peacefully speaking to the abuser in private.—Matthew 5:39; Proverbs 15:1.

b) Aug. 15, 1992 w.t. page # 4-10

Avoiding Rotten Speech

⁴ Ephesians 4:29 first urges us: "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth." That may not be easy. One reason is that profanity is so common in the world around us. Many Christian youths hear cursing daily, for schoolmates may think that it adds emphasis or makes them appear tougher. We may not fully be able to avoid hearing foul words, but we can and should make a conscious effort not to absorb these. They have no place in our minds or mouths.

⁵ Underlying Paul's warning is a Greek word that relates to spoiled fish or decayed fruit. Visualize this: You observe a man get impatient and then outright furious. Finally he explodes, and you see a putrefied fish come out of his mouth. You then see stinking, decayed fruit tumble out, splashing all nearby. Who is he? How terrible if he were any of us! Yet, such an image could fit if we 'let rotten sayings proceed out of our mouth.'

⁶ Another application of Ephesians 4:29 is for us to avoid being constantly critical. Granted, all of us have opinions and tastes about things we do not like or accept, but have you been around someone who seems to have a negative comment (or many comments) about every person, place, or thing mentioned? (Compare Romans 12:9; Hebrews 1:9.) His speech tears down, depresses, or destroys. (Psalm 10:7; 64:2-4; Proverbs 16:27; James 4:11, 12) He may not realize how much he resembles the critical ones Malachi described. (Malachi 3:13-15) How shocked he might be if a bystander told him that a putrefied fish or decaying fruit was slipping out of his mouth!

⁷ While it is easy to recognize when someone else constantly makes negative or critical comments, ask yourself, 'Do I tend to be like that? Really, do I?' It would be wise to reflect occasionally on the spirit of our words. Are they primarily negative, critical? Do we sound like Job's three false comforters? (Job 2:11; 13:4, 5; 16:2; 19:2) Why not find a positive aspect to mention? If a conversation is mainly critical, why not steer it into upbuilding matters?

⁸ Malachi presented this contrast: "Those in fear of Jehovah spoke with one another, each one with his companion, and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance began to be written up before him for those in fear of Jehovah and for those thinking upon his name." (Malachi 3:16) Did you notice how God responded to upbuilding speech? What was the likely effect of such conversation on associates? We can personally learn a lesson regarding our daily speech. How much finer for us and others if our typical conversation reflects our 'sacrifice of praise to God.'—Hebrews 13:15.

Work at Building Others Up

⁹ Congregation meetings are excellent occasions to speak 'whatever is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to hearers.' (Ephesians 4:29) We can do that when giving a talk on Biblical information, sharing in a demonstration, or commenting during question-and-answer parts. We thus verify Proverbs 20:15: "The lips of knowledge are precious vessels." And who knows how many hearts we touch or build up?

¹⁰ The time before and after meetings is convenient for building others up with conversation that is favorable to the hearers. It would be easy to spend these periods in pleasant talk with relatives and a small number of friends with whom we are comfortable. (John 13:23; 19:26) However, in line with Ephesians 4:29, why not seek out others to speak with? (Compare Luke 14:12-14.) We could determine beforehand to go beyond saying just a formal or passing good-day to certain new ones, older folk, or youngsters, even sitting down with young ones so as to be more on their level. Our genuine interest and periods of upbuilding speech will make others even more able to echo David's sentiments at Psalm 122:1.

c) God's Love book Chapter 12 par. 1-14

Speak What "Is Good for Building Up"

"Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up."—EPHESIANS 4:29.

IF YOU were to give a loved one a gift, how would you feel if he deliberately misused it? Say that you gave him a car, and you later learned that he drove it recklessly, causing injury to others. Would you not be disappointed?

² The ability to utter intelligible speech is a gift from Jehovah, the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) This gift, which sets the human family apart from the animal creation, enables us to convey not just our thoughts but also our feelings to others. Like a motor vehicle, however, the gift of speech can be misused. How it must disappoint Jehovah when speech is used recklessly, causing heartache and pain to others!

³ To remain in God's love, we need to use the gift of speech as the Giver intended. Jehovah leaves no doubt about the kind of speech that pleases him. His Word says: "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29) Let us discuss why we need to keep on guard when it comes to speech, what speech we should avoid, and how we can utter speech that "is good for building up."

WHY WE NEED TO GUARD OUR SPEECH

⁴ One important reason to guard our speech is that *words have power*. Proverbs 15:4 says: "The calmness of the tongue is a tree of life, but distortion in it means a breaking down in the spirit." Even as water revives a thirsty tree, so the calm speech of a soothing tongue can refresh the spirit of those hearing it. In contrast, the twisted words of a perverse tongue can crush the spirit of others. Indeed, the words we speak have the power to injure or to heal.—Proverbs 18:21.

⁵ Vividly describing the power of words, another proverb says: "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword." (Proverbs 12:18) Thoughtless words said in haste can cause deep emotional wounds and destroy relationships. Has your heart ever been pierced by the thrusts of a verbal sword? On the positive side, the same proverb says: "The tongue of the wise ones is a healing." Thoughtful words from one who manifests godly wisdom can mend an aching heart and restore relationships. Can you recall an occasion when you experienced the healing power of kind words? (Proverbs 16:24) Recognizing that spoken words have power, we certainly want to use our speech to heal others, not to hurt them.

⁶ No matter how hard we try, we cannot completely control our tongue. Here, then, is a second reason why we need to keep on guard respecting our speech: *Sin and imperfection incline us toward misusing our tongue*. Words are a product of our heart, and "the inclination of the heart of man is bad." (Genesis

8:21; Luke 6:45) Bridling our tongue is therefore a real struggle. (James 3:2-4) Although we cannot gain perfect control of our tongue, we can keep working at making improvement in how we use it. Just as a swimmer trying to swim upstream has to keep fighting the current, so we have to keep fighting the sinful tendency to misuse our tongue.

⁷ A third reason to guard our speech is that *Jehovah holds us accountable for our words*. The way we use our tongue affects not only our relationship with fellow humans but also our standing with Jehovah. James 1:26 says: "If any man seems to himself to be a formal worshiper and yet does not bridle his tongue, but goes on deceiving his own heart, this man's form of worship is futile." As we saw in the preceding chapter, our speech is not independent of our worship. If our tongue is unbridled—spewing out hurtful, poisonous speech—all of our Christian works could be rendered worthless in God's eyes. Is that not a sobering thought?—James 3:8-10.

⁸ It is clear that we have strong reasons to guard against misusing the gift of speech. Before we consider wholesome forms of speech that build up, let us discuss speech that certainly has no place in the life of a true Christian.

SPEECH THAT TEARS DOWN

⁹ *Obscene language*. Cursing, profanity, and other forms of obscene language are part of everyday speech in today's world. Many resort to expletives to emphasize their speech or to compensate for an otherwise limited vocabulary. Comedians often use vulgar, sex-oriented speech to make people laugh. Obscene language, however, is no laughing matter. Some 2,000 years ago, the inspired apostle Paul counseled the Colossian congregation to put away "obscene talk." (Colossians 3:8) Paul told the Ephesian congregation that "obscene jesting" is among things that should "not even be mentioned among" true Christians.—Ephesians 5:3, 4.

¹⁰ Obscene speech is offensive to Jehovah. It is also offensive to those who love him. Indeed, our love for Jehovah moves us to reject obscene language. When listing "the works of the flesh," Paul cites "uncleanness," which can include impurity in speech. (Galatians 5:19-21) This is a serious matter. An individual can be disfellowshipped from the congregation if despite repeated counsel he unrepentantly makes a practice of using speech that refers to or promotes what is grossly immoral, degrading, and corrupting.

¹¹ *Harmful gossip, slander*. Gossip is idle talk about people and their lives. Is all gossip bad? Not if we mean innocent conversation in which we might share positive or helpful news, such as who just got baptized or who needs a word of encouragement. First-century Christians had a keen interest in one another's welfare and shared appropriate information about fellow believers. (Ephesians 6:21, 22; Colossians 4:8, 9) Gossip, however, can be harmful if it distorts the facts or reveals private matters. Even more serious, it can lead to slander, which is always damaging. Slander is "the utterance of false charges . . . which defame and damage another's reputation." The Pharisees, for example, resorted to malicious slander in an attempt to discredit Jesus. (Matthew 9:32-34; 12:22-24) Slander often causes contention.—Proverbs 26:20.

¹² Jehovah does not view lightly those who use the gift of speech to defame others or to cause divisions. He hates those causing "contentions among brothers." (Proverbs 6:16-19) The Greek word rendered "slanderer" is *di-a'bo-los*, which is also used as a title of Satan. He is the "Devil," the evil slanderer of God. (Revelation 12:9, 10) Surely we want to avoid speech that would cause us to become, in effect, a devil. There is no room in the congregation for slanderous speech that stirs up such works of the flesh as "contentions" and "divisions." (Galatians 5:19-21) Hence, before repeating some news about someone, ask yourself: 'Is it true? Would it be kind to repeat this? Is it necessary or advisable to share this information?'—1 Thessalonians 4:11.

¹³ *Abusive speech*. As previously noted, words have the power to hurt. Admittedly, at times because of human imperfection, we all say things we regret. However, the Bible warns about a pattern of speech that has absolutely no place in a Christian home or in the congregation. Paul admonished Christians: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you." (Ephesians 4:31) Other translations render the phrase "abusive speech" as "evil words," "injurious language," and "insulting language." Abusive speech—including degrading name-calling and harsh, relentless criticism—can strip others of their dignity and leave them feeling worthless. The tender and

trusting hearts of children are especially vulnerable to the crushing effects of abusive speech.—
Colossians 3:21.

¹⁴ In the strongest possible terms, the Bible condemns reviling—the practice of vilifying others with insulting, derogatory, or abusive language. An individual who makes a practice of such speech puts himself in a dangerous position, for a reviler can be removed from the congregation if he fails to heed repeated efforts to help him change. Unless he changes his ways, he could also lose out on Kingdom blessings. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 6:9, 10) Clearly, then, there is no way for us to remain in God's love if we make a practice of uttering speech that is unwholesome, untrue, or unkind. Such speech tears down.

Conclusion:

I strongly feel that this is a Service Committee matter, and as such, should be handled by the committee as a whole. The problem is, it will have to wait until the District Convention & Pioneer school is over, { August 10-26 } After that, I will be able to sit down with the two of you and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Also, if you do not mind, I would like to have His wife, [REDACTED] sit in on our discussion with him as well.