ESSAY · MAY 8, 2014

The Power of Affirmation

Written by Bill Perkins

A study of maladjusted students in a large Oklahoma high school reveals the importance of verbal affirmation. The counselors in the school first developed close relationships with ten of the school's most troubled teenagers. Next the counselors asked the kids, "How long has it been since your parents told you they loved you?" Only one of the students could remember hearing it at all, and he didn't remember when.

This Morning, Last Evening, Yesterday

In sharp contrast, students in that same school who were considered well-adjusted gave answers like: "This morning," "Last evening," and "Yesterday." Solomon highlighted the importance of a word spoken at the right time when he said, "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." (Proverbs 25:11).

Words of affirmation uttered at the right time show the wisdom of a jeweler who places a delicate golden apple in a sterling silver setting.

The Power of the Tongue

Your words are powerful. Solomon said, "The tongue has the power of life and death (Prov. 18:21a). James, the half brother of Jesus wrote that the tongue is like a bit in a horse's mouth, a rudder on a ship, or a fire which sets a forest ablaze (James 3:3-5).

A Wart Isn't the Whole Face

Your wife, kids, and those you work with need to hear words of affirmation and encouragement. You may say, "You don't know my wife, kids, or fellow employees." That's true. But it's also true that no matter a person's flaws-there are always things to affirm. It's a matter of focus. A wart on the face of a friend isn't pretty, but it's not the whole face. If it's all you see, however, you may begin to think of your friend as a wart.

Praise Without the Punch

Sometimes I hear men praise their wife or a child and then steal the blessing away with criticism. It's like patting someone on the back and then sucker punching them in the stomach. That doesn't mean we shouldn't offer correction. Rather it means we need to learn how to offer praise without following it up with a negative comment.

This week let's look for an opportunity every day to speak a word of kindness to those we love.