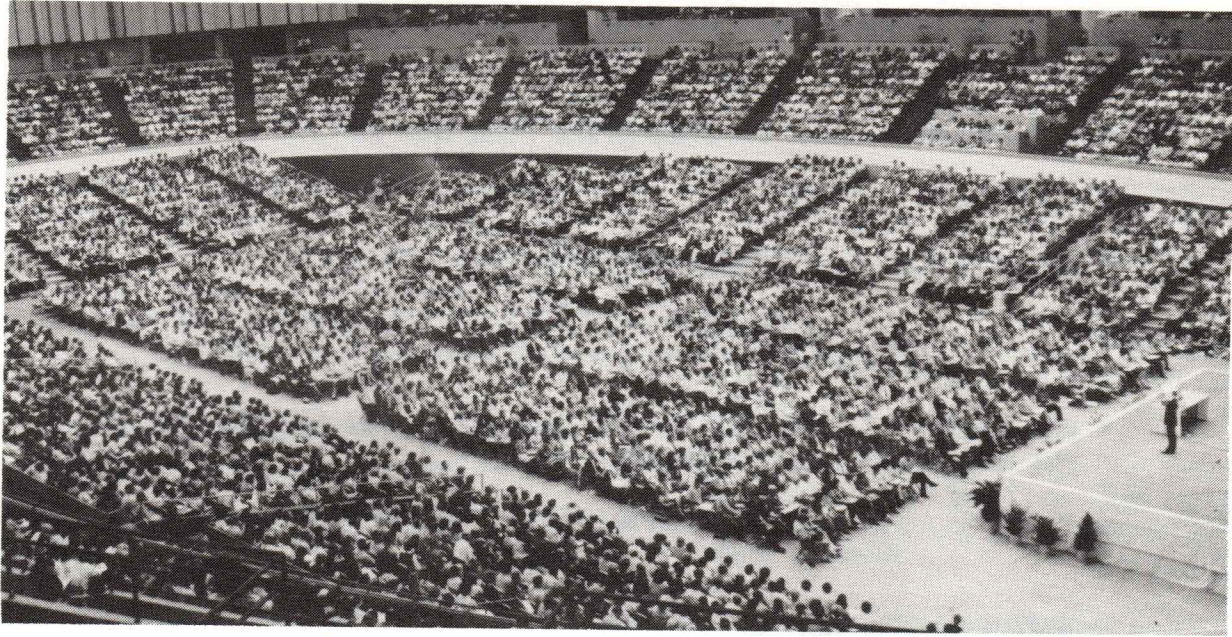


Instructions  
for our  
Most  
Important  
Battle

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

A Special Message to Alumni From Bill Gothard.....	1
Basic Insights on Taming Our Tongue.....	2
Basic Guides to Tame the Tongue.....	3
An 8-Fold Test to Tame the Tongue.....	4
Twelve "Tongue Tamers".....	5
Detecting Discernment and Judgment.....	6-9
Detecting Repeating and Reviling.....	10-13
The Power of Giving a Good Report.....	14
A Vital Project to Tame the Tongue.....	15-17
Questions and Answers on the Agreement of a Good Report.....	18-21
Giving a Bad Report Without Words.....	22
How to Detect and Respond to a Bad Report.....	23-24
Taming Our Words by Guarding Our Thoughts.....	25
Guarding Our Thoughts With God's Truth.....	26
Discerning False Concepts.....	27



Dear Friend,

Each of us has an enemy that is always with us. Just when we think we are the victor we experience new defeats. We are able to defeat some enemies but never this one. This enemy is our own tongue!

There is a reason why God warns us that we will never conquer our tongue. At the same time He requires that we assume full responsibility for every word it says. If each of us is to learn how to become mighty in spirit, we must first learn the basic skills of taming the tongue. These skills and a vital project are contained in this book.

I believe that the head of any family or organization who initiates the project on pages 15 to 17 will be thrilled and challenged to see the resulting spiritual growth and character development.

It is my prayer that each of us will thoroughly study and fully apply this information. *"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (I Peter 3:10).*

Through Christ our Lord,

*Bill*

**BASIC INSIGHTS:**

## **TAMING OUR TONGUE**

- **GOD WARNS US THAT WE WILL NEVER TAME OUR TONGUE**

*"But the tongue can no man tame . . ." (James 3:8).*

- **WE ARE FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY WORD WE SPEAK**

*". . . Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).*

- **WE CANNOT CONTROL OUR TONGUE BECAUSE IT WILL ALWAYS REVEAL THE TRUE THOUGHTS OF OUR INNER SPIRIT**

*". . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).*

- **WRONG CONCLUSIONS OR ATTITUDES WE ALLOW IN OUR SPIRIT WILL BE CONVEYED IN OUR WORDS, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND TONAL PATTERNS**

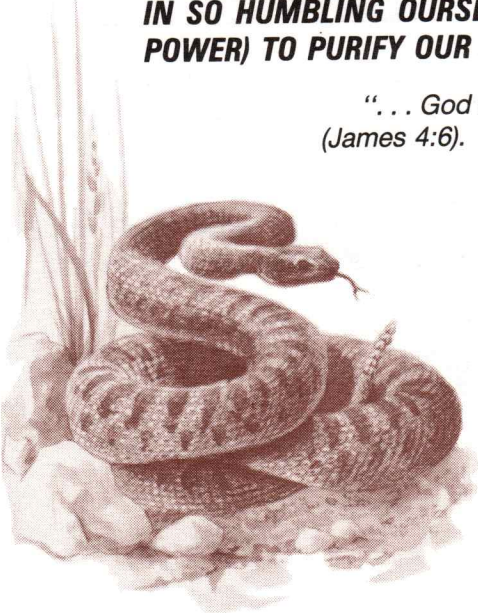
*". . . An evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).*

- **OUR TONGUE IS A DAILY REMINDER AND MOTIVATION TO PURIFY OUR HEART**

*". . . Purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8).*

- **WE MUST ASK FORGIVENESS FOR EVERY OFFENSE OF THE TONGUE, BUT IN SO HUMBLING OURSELVES WE RECEIVE MORE GRACE (DESIRE AND POWER) TO PURIFY OUR HEART**

*". . . God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).*



*"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8).*

# BASIC GUIDES TO TAME THE TONGUE

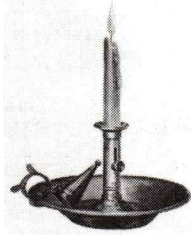
1. DEDICATE OUR HEART AND OUR TONGUE TO THE LORD DAILY. (Romans 12:1)
2. PUT OUR HEART IN TUNE WITH GOD'S SPIRIT BY DAILY READING HIS WORD. (Psalm 119:9,13)
3. ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERY WORD WE SPEAK. (Matthew 5:21,22)
4. DISCOVER FROM THOSE AROUND US WHAT OFFENSIVE WORDS WE USE. (Proverbs 17:10)
5. COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE PURPOSE OF GIVING A GOOD REPORT AND FOLLOWING MATTHEW 18 WHEN IT IS NECESSARY. (Matthew 18:15-17)
6. FULFILL PAST PROMISES AND CAREFULLY CONSIDER ANY NEW PROMISES. (Matthew 5:33-37)
7. ASK FORGIVENESS FOR ANY UNLOVING WORDS OR ATTITUDES. (Matthew 5:23-24)
8. LEARN HOW TO GIVE WORDS THAT WILL ENCOURAGE, COMFORT, INSPIRE AND EDIFY. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
9. "LISTEN" TO OUR WORDS THROUGH THE EARS OF OTHERS BEFORE WE SPEAK THEM. (Psalm 19:14)
10. DISCERN THE SPIRIT OF OUR HEARERS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER WE SPEAK. (Psalm 55:21)
11. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN DISCERNMENT AND JUDGMENT. (See pages 6-9) (James 4:11)
12. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN REPROVING AND REVILING. (See pages 10-13) (1 Timothy 6:4)
13. URGE OUR FRIENDS TO TELL US WHEN WE OFFEND WITH OUR WORDS. (Proverbs 27:6)



*"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:6).*

**DISCIPLINING THE THOUGHTS OF OUR HEART**

# **AN 8-FOLD TEST TO TAME THE TONGUE**



• Because our words are only a reflection of the “. . . abundance of the heart . . .” (Luke 6:45) it is essential that we bring “. . . into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5).

In Philippians 4:8 we are given a vital checklist to evaluate each of our thoughts.

## **WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE . . .**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>TRUE</b> ἀληθής (ACCURATE)          | <input type="checkbox"/> WILL IT GIVE AN ACCURATE IMPRESSION?           |
| 2. <b>HONEST</b> σεμνός (HONORABLE)       | <input type="checkbox"/> SHOULD IT BE IMITATED BY OTHERS?               |
| 3. <b>JUST</b> δίκαιος (PROPER)           | <input type="checkbox"/> IS IT APPROPRIATE TO SAY AT THIS TIME?         |
| 4. <b>PURE</b> άγνός (UNCONTAMINATED)     | <input type="checkbox"/> IS IT MOTIVATED BY ANY PRIDE OR SELFISHNESS?   |
| 5. <b>LOVELY</b> προσφιλής (PLEASANT)     | <input type="checkbox"/> WILL IT BRIGHTEN THE LIVES OF ALL WHO HEAR IT? |
| 6. <b>GOOD REPORT</b> εὐφημος (ESTEEM)    | <input type="checkbox"/> WILL IT DAMAGE ANYONE'S REPUTATION?            |
| 7. <b>VIRTUE</b> ἀρέτη (MORAL EXCELLENCE) | <input type="checkbox"/> WILL IT MOTIVATE OTHERS TO GODLY LIVING?       |
| 8. <b>PRAISE</b> ἔπαινος (PRAISEWORTHY)   | <input type="checkbox"/> WILL IT EDIFY ALL WHO HEAR IT?                 |

*“. . . THINK ON THESE THINGS . . . AND THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU” (Philippians 4:8–9).*

## **HOW ONE MAN'S DESIRE TO GIVE A GOOD REPORT REMOVED TEMPTATION FOR MANY OTHERS**

One day a father was sitting in a barber's chair having his hair cut. During the course of conversation with the barber he stated, "There's only one thing that keeps me from giving a good report about this barbershop."

The surprised and curious barber asked, "What's that?" He replied, "It's those sensual magazines you have on your reading table. The last time I was here my little boy was with me, and I saw the danger of exposing him to this kind of magazine."

The father was quite amazed at the immediate response of the barber. "You're the second person who has talked to me about those magazines." Then he said to his associate, "Let's get rid of them right now."

He went over to the table, picked them up, walked to the back of the shop, threw them in a trash barrel and said, "We'll be cancelling our subscription to that magazine!"

*"Let the words of my mouth, and meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).*

# TWELVE "TONGUE TAMERS"

• The following twelve verses are only a few of the many that deal with the tongue. By memorizing them we will be building a "Scriptural guard" to check our words before we say them.

## Check when memorized:

- 1.** "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (Proverbs 13:3).
- 2.** "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs 29:20).
- 3.** "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Proverbs 18:13).
- 4.** "... Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).
- 5.** "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).
- 6.** "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Proverbs 15:23).
- 7.** "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).
- 8.** "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger . . . A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (Proverbs 15:1,4).
- 9.** "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Proverbs 17:28).
- 10.** "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 18:8).
- 11.** "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1 Peter 3:10).
- 12.** "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

## ***DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DISCERNMENT AND JUDGMENT?***

### **ILLUSTRATION NUMBER ONE**



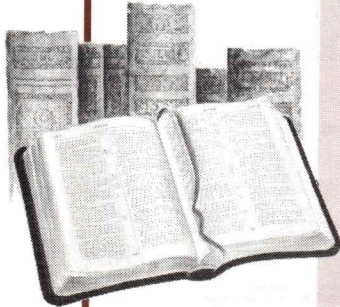
- On the way home from church one member of a family commented, "Based on the man they appointed to teach our class it would appear that our church has some serious spiritual needs. He has major problems in his marriage; his children have rebelled, and his dress and hairstyle offend many in the church."

### **CHECK THE RIGHT ANSWER:**

- THIS FAMILY MEMBER WAS JUDGING.
  
- THIS FAMILY MEMBER WAS DISCERNING.

- A Christian is never to judge another. God warns that anyone who does will be judged himself (Matthew 7:1-2). But the Christian who is mighty in spirit has the ability to make wise discernments.

## THE ROOT MEANING OF DISCERNMENT



The following Greek verbs describe the scope and action of discernment:

**δοκιμάζω** to test, to examine; to interpret, to discover; to approve; to prove, to demonstrate

**ἀνακρίνω** to ask questions, to examine; to evaluate, to scrutinize, to investigate; to search out

**διακρίνω** to make a distinction (between persons); to weigh thoroughly each part

## THE ROOT MEANING OF JUDGMENT

This Greek verb is used in Scripture to describe the scope and action of judgment:

**κρίνω** to pass judgment on, to sentence; to mentally or judicially condemn; to conclude, to decide, to determine

- Based on the above definitions, if the family member in illustration number one were investigating the spiritual needs of the church, he would be discerning. But if he were concluding that there were spiritual needs without taking proper steps to resolve them, he would be judging. The factors on the following page indicate which he was doing.

# BASIC FACTORS OF DISCERNMENT *vs.* JUDGMENT

<p><b>1.</b> One who discerns thoroughly <u>examines himself</u> before evaluating the actions of others.</p>	<p>One who judges <u>condemns others</u> for their visible problems but fails to realize that their attitudes stem from root problems which he himself has not yet overcome.</p>
<p><i>"But let every man <u>prove</u> (δοκιμάζω) his own work . . ." (Galatians 6:4).</i></p> <p><i>"But let a man <u>examine</u> (δοκιμάζω) himself . . ." (I Corinthians 11:28).</i></p> <p><i>"For if we would <u>judge</u> (δοκιμάζω) ourselves, we would not be judged." (I Corinthians 11:31).</i></p> <p><i>"Examine yourselves . . . <u>prove</u> (δοκιμάζω) your own selves . . ." (II Corinthians 13:5).</i></p>	<p><i>"Therefore thou art <u>inexcusable</u>, O man, whosoever thou art that <u>judgest</u> (κρίνω): for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1).</i></p> <p><i>"But why dost thou <u>judge</u> (κρίνω) thy brother? . . . for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10).</i></p>
<p><b>2.</b> One who discerns <u>checks the accuracy</u> of all the facts and related factors before reaching a conclusion.</p>	<p>One who judges <u>forms opinions</u> on first impressions or hearsay, then looks for evidence to confirm his opinions even though the evidence may be out of context.</p>
<p><i>"But he that is spiritual <u>judgeth</u> (ἀνακρίνω) all things, yet he himself is <u>judged</u> (ἀνακρίνω) of no man" (I Corinthians 2:15).</i></p> <p><i>"<u>Prove</u> (δοκιμάζω) all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21).</i></p> <p><i>"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but <u>try</u> (δοκιμάζω) the spirits whether they are of God . . ." (I John 4:1).</i></p>	<p><i>"Judge (κρίνω) not according to the appearance, but <u>judge righteous judgment</u>" (John 7:24).</i></p> <p><i>"Doth our law <u>judge</u> (κρίνω) any man, before it hear him . . ." (John 7:51).</i></p> <p><i>"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and <u>judgeth</u> (κρίνω) his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and <u>judgeth</u> the law . . ." (James 4:11).</i></p>
<p><b>3.</b> One who discerns deals as <u>privately</u> as possible with the problems he sees.</p>	<p>One who judges <u>publicly exposes</u> those he condemns. This may cause others to condemn him for having the same root problem, such as pride, lack of love, or a critical spirit, etc.</p>
<p><i>". . . Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to <u>judge</u> (διακρίνω) between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers" (I Corinthians 6:5-6).</i></p>	<p><i>"<u>Judge</u> (κρίνω) not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).</i></p>

• The member of that family in illustration number one judged according to appearance and gave a bad report to those who were not directly involved with the problem. If he were discerning he would have privately investigated all the facts and factors before discussing it with others.

# CAN YOU IDENTIFY DISCERNMENT AND JUDGMENT?

SITUATIONS	ANSWERS
<p><b>A.</b> A teacher in a Christian school was discussing a new theology textbook with his class. When he came to one chapter he said, "I have done quite a bit of study on this subject, and I disagree with the author on the points he has made."</p> <p>JUDGMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISCERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>It is never right for a teacher in a Christian school to violate the spirit of Scripture in order to teach the truth of Scripture. God urges all Christians to ". . . be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2).</p> <p>Truth out of balance is heresy, and a spirit of disagreement polarizes views which may result in doctrinal imbalance.</p> <p>The teacher could have built a basis for doctrinal balance by saying to the students, "After studying these points I felt that our text missed the mark so I contacted the author. Here are the results of our discussion." By failing to do this, he projected to his students a spirit of judgment.</p>
<p><b>B.</b> A pastor asked a college student for a report on the spiritual life of another church member who was attending the same college. The student replied, "I haven't seen much of him but he doesn't seem to be very interested in spiritual things. He has dropped out of our fellowship group and spends quite a bit of time with friends who I do not think are helping him spiritually."</p> <p>JUDGMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISCERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Since the student had not had recent contact with his friend, he was not qualified to give an accurate report. The general impression he left with the pastor, however, was that the other student had backslidden.</p> <p>Judgment involves opinions that are not checked for accuracy. Discernment involves a desire to restore. Accordingly, the student could have used the pastor's inquiry as the basis for going to his friend and discussing his spiritual welfare with him.</p> <p>Meanwhile, he could have said to the pastor, "I've lost touch with him since he dropped out of our fellowship group but I believe a contact from you would be much appreciated."</p>
<p><b>C.</b> An employer realized that one of his employees was costing the company quite a bit of money through errors. He called him to his office and said, "I've observed that you're making quite a number of errors in your work. Would you be able to give me a reason why this is happening?"</p> <p>JUDGMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISCERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The employer could have publicly condemned the employee for the number of mistakes he was making. He also could have told others how displeased he was with him. But by calling him in privately and giving him an opportunity to explain the causes, the employer was following the steps of discernment rather than judgment. The next step in discernment would be for the employer to work with the employee in removing the causes for the errors.</p>

## ***DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REPROVING AND REVILING?***

ILLUSTRATION NUMBER TWO



• A Christian journalist learned that a Christian organization was mishandling funds which had been solicited through appeal letters. He decided that the information should be brought to the Christian public, so he approached the head of the organization to make sure his facts were accurate. The director refused to meet with him. The journalist made two further attempts, bringing other reporters with him, but both attempts were unsuccessful. He then published the article exposing the problem.

### **CHECK THE RIGHT ANSWER:**

- THIS REPORTER WAS FOLLOWING THE SCRIPTURAL INJUNCTION TO REPROVE AN OFFENDING BROTHER.
- THIS REPORTER WAS GUILTY OF THE SIN OF REVILING A CHRISTIAN BROTHER.

• There is a major difference between reprovng and reviling. We are told in Scripture to reprove an offending brother but some who believe they are reprovng are, in reality, reviling. Reviling is such a serious offense that a Christian who persists in doing it is to be totally avoided by other Christians (I Corinthians 5:11).

## THE ROOT MEANING OF REPROVING

Scripture associates exhorting with the action of reproving or rebuking an offending brother. Together these three provide the necessary balance to approach a brother who needs correction.

### REPROVE

ἐλέγχω

to tell someone of his fault, to admonish, to convince someone of his error; to give evidence; to convict

### REBUKE

ἐπιτιμάω

to command, to charge, to order; to admonish

### EXHORT

παρακαλέω

to beg, to urge; to encourage, to request, to ask, to appeal to; to console, to comfort, to cheer up; to call to one side and urge to pursue a course of action

## THE ROOT MEANING OF REVILING

The following three Greek words describe the scope and action of the sin of reviling or railing.

### REVILE

ὀνειδίζω

to reproach, to denounce, to insult, to taunt, to chide

λοιδορέω

to speak evil of, to insult, to reproach, to vilify, to be abusive

### RAIL

βλασφημέω

to vilify; to speak impiously; to defame; to speak evil

- The basic motivation of reproving must be to restore the offending brother, not to expose him. If the motive of the journalist in illustration number two was to write an article for the public rather than to restore the leader, he would be guilty of the sin of reviling. The following factors reveal which he was doing.

# BASIC FACTORS OF

## REPROVING vs. REVILING

<p><b>1.</b> One who reprovcs or rebukes has the basic objective of <u>restoring</u> an offender through exhortation.</p>	<p>One who reviles or rails has the basic objective of <u>exposing</u> one whom he has already judged.</p>
<p>“ . . . <u>Reprove</u> (ἐλέγχω), <u>rebuke</u> (ἐπιτιμάω), <u>exhort</u> (παρακαλέω) with all longsuffering and doctrine” (II Timothy 4:2).</p> <p>“ . . . Wherefore (to <u>exhort</u> and convince— vs. 9) <u>rebuke</u> (ἐλέγχω) them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13).</p> <p>“These things speak, and <u>exhort</u> (παρακαλέω), and <u>rebuke</u> (ἐλέγχω) with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15).</p>	<p>“And one of the malefactors which were hanged <u>railed</u> (βλασφημέω) on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us” (Luke 23:39).</p> <p>“And they that passed by <u>railed</u> (βλασφημέω) on him, wagging their heads . . .” (Mark 15:29).</p>
<p><b>2.</b> One who reprovcs or rebukes <u>combines love and truth</u> when correcting a brother. Truth without love is harshness. Love without truth is compromise.</p>	<p>One who reviles or rails <u>disclaims any further responsibility</u> for or association with the one whom he has judged.</p>
<p>“As many as I love, I <u>rebuke</u> (ἐλέγχω) and chasten . . .” (Revelation 3:19).</p> <p>“Them that (continue to) sin <u>rebuke</u> (ἐλέγχω) before all, that others also may fear” (I Timothy 5:20).</p> <p>“ . . . If thy brother trespass against thee, <u>rebuke</u> (ἐπιτιμάω) him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3).</p>	<p>“Then they <u>reviled</u> (λοιδορέω) him, (the blind man) and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples” (John 9:28).</p> <p>“Who, when he was <u>reviled</u> (λοιδορέω), reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (I Peter 2:23).</p>
<p><b>3.</b> One who reprovcs or rebukes is aware of certain <u>limitations</u>.</p>	<p>One who reviles or rails recognizes <u>no restrictions</u> on his efforts to vilify or defame.</p>
<p>“<u>Rebuke</u> (ἐπιτιμάω) not an elder, but <u>entreat</u> (παρακαλέω) him as a father . . .” (I Timothy 5:1).</p> <p>“Yet Michael the archangel . . . durst not bring against him (Satan) a railing accusation, but said, The Lord <u>rebuke</u> (ἐπιτιμάω) thee” (Jude 9).</p>	<p>“Blessed are ye, when men shall <u>revile</u> (ὀνειδίζω) you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11).</p> <p>“He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh . . . <u>railings</u> (βλασφημέω) . . .” (I Timothy 6:4).</p>

• There is a time and a place to “tell the church” when an offending brother refuses to correct his ways. But the journalist in illustration number two appears to have been more interested in publishing his article than in restoring a brother. Consequently, he would be guilty of reviling.

# CAN YOU IDENTIFY REPROVING AND REVILING?

SITUATIONS	ANSWERS
<p><b>A.</b> A 9-year-old girl tried to make cookies while her mother was shopping. In the process she broke a mixing bowl and left the sink full of dirty dishes. Her older brother who had been left in charge saw it and said to her, "I told you not to bake those cookies. Now that you've disobeyed me, I'm going to have to tell Mom what you did."</p> <p>REPROVING <input type="checkbox"/>      REVILING <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The brother had been left in charge and was responsible to report any problems. But a more basic responsibility was to demonstrate a spirit of love and understanding to his sister. One expression of this could have been to help her see her own wrong. Then he could have helped her ask her mother's forgiveness and replace the mixing bowl.</p> <p>The brother's irritation was reflected in his concern to present his case to their mother so that his sister be punished. This would cause her only to defend her actions and judge her brother for a spirit of reviling.</p>
<p><b>B.</b> A seventh-grade student near the back of the classroom whispered something to the boy seated behind him. The teacher noticed it, stopped the lesson and said to the boy, "Whenever you talk while I am talking you are being disrespectful. If you have something to say I'm sure it can wait until after class."</p> <p>REPROVING <input type="checkbox"/>      REVILING <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>There is a place for public reproof in the classroom but in this case the student's whispering was noticed only by the teacher and a few students.</p> <p>It would have been much more effective to have met with the student after class in order to explain the unspoken messages which are conveyed by yawns, clock watching, slouching in the chair, whispering, etc. The teacher could have challenged the boy to learn the disciplines of being a perceptive listener, while at the same time, encouraging the speaker.</p> <p>The approach he used caused the students to discern a spirit of reviling in the teacher.</p>
<p><b>C.</b> A girl rebelled against God and her parents. She left home, bringing public shame to her family and especially to her father who was a deacon in their church. One day the girl called to say that she was going to have a child and she wanted to return home. She expressed sorrow over the consequences of her sin.</p> <p>The father explained to her, "Because you have rejected God and your family you must now bear the consequence of your actions. I have had to warn our other children not to follow your example, and therefore I cannot allow you to return home."</p> <p>REPROVING <input type="checkbox"/>      REVILING <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>A problem of this nature is not a "daughter's" problem but a "family" problem. The father must explain to each member of his family the consequences of getting out from under God's "umbrella" of protection. He must then examine himself for any inconsistencies through which temptation might have come to his daughter.</p> <p>The return of his daughter as an unwed mother would have been embarrassing, but by humbling himself the father would have gained for his entire family a greater measure of grace (the desire and power to do God's will).</p> <p>The daughter's child could have become a loving reminder of the lessons God was teaching each one. By failing to give the daughter steps of action to restore fellowship, the father was guilty of reviling.</p>

# **THE POWER OF GIVING A GOOD REPORT**

## **HOW ONE MAN USED A GOOD REPORT TO AVOID PUBLIC DISSENSION**

The reader of a Christian magazine came upon an article that had special interest to him. He was grieved after reading it, believing that the author had missed the mark, and that as a result, many would stumble.

The following week the reader was going to have an opportunity to publicly explain to many others that this author had missed the mark. But as he was planning what he was going to say, the steps of Matthew 18 came to his mind.

He knew he must first go privately to the author, so he called him and said, "I sincerely desire to give a good report of your article, but after reading it I am not able to do so."

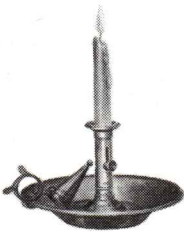
The author was very gracious and willing to discuss the points which the reader felt were missed. They were ideas which the author had not considered, so he suggested that the reader write a second article on this topic, and offered his assistance in getting it published. The reader suggested that it would be better if the article were published under the author's name, thus correcting any misunderstanding in the minds of those who read the first article.

## **HOW ONE TEACHER RESOLVED DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS WITH A GOOD REPORT**

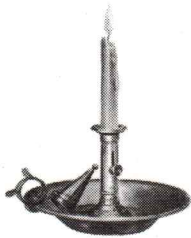
A teacher of very young children realized that one of her greatest challenges would be to maintain harmony among the children in her class. One day she gathered the children together and explained to them the principle of giving a good report and emphasized the importance of each one doing so.

Accordingly, no child was to tell her that another was misbehaving until he first went to that child. He must go in love and say something like, "What you are doing is making me feel bad." Only if the child persisted in misbehaving would the first child be allowed to tell the teacher.

This procedure was so effective that the discipline problems almost disappeared, and a spirit of greater love and understanding developed among the children.



# A VITAL PROJECT TO TAME THE TONGUE



- If we truly intend to accomplish a task, we must tell a friend who will lovingly remind us of our purpose and help us achieve our goal. Without accountability, purposes are buried under good intentions.

Taming the tongue is one purpose that we, our family, and the Body of Christ cannot afford to bury. It is, in fact, a test of the genuineness of our faith. *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue . . . this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).*

On the other hand, taming the tongue by transforming the heart carries with it the reward of being able to control the whole body. *" . . . If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2).*

## **APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Several months ago one member of a family took the agreement on the following page to each member of his immediate family as well as to some close relatives. He used statements such as the following to encourage them to put their signatures on this agreement:

*"I've been looking for something that will force me to guard my words, and I know that this will do it."*

*"Would it give you a sense of security to know that everyone is giving a good report about you unless they check with you first?"*

If, after explaining the agreement, they still hesitated to sign it, he said with a smile, "I need something like this to protect you from the things I might say." Twelve immediate family members, close relatives, and a partner from a previous marriage signed the agreement.

The benefits to this family are being recorded as a valuable part of the heritage they will be able to pass on to their children. Each situation they encounter gives them new insights into loyalty, new understanding of each other's thoughts and feelings, and a greater appreciation for each other. One such illustration is recorded in the account below.

## **HOW ONE WOMAN WITH A BROKEN MARRIAGE DISCOVERED SECURITY THROUGH A GOOD REPORT**

A woman traveling from Alaska to California met an old friend who knew of her broken marriage and resulting bitterness. During their conversation the friend asked, "How deeply did your former husband hurt you before you left him?"

Previously this would have been a signal to review all the hurts of the past, but instead this woman said, "Just recently I signed an agreement to give only a good report of others. So I really am not able to answer your question."

Later she realized that this was the first time she had conquered the temptation to speak evil of her former husband. She discovered a new joy within herself and freedom from bitterness.

When her son asked her why she felt so good about this one incident she replied, "In addition to these new attitudes, I know that everyone else who signed that agreement is treating me the same way. This gives me a real sense of security."

A good report  
makes healthy bones.  
Proverbs 15:30

# Giving a Good Report

*In obedience to the Word of God,  
we hereby commit ourselves to the goal of giving a good report.  
When this is not possible, we purpose to remain silent  
or to go privately to the person, confirm our goal,  
and explain the offense that would hinder us from giving a good report.  
We hereby purpose to approach an offender in a spirit of genuine love  
having first examined and corrected our own attitudes and actions.  
Only if we are unable to restore an offender will we share the problem  
with others according to the principles of Scripture.  
When we violate this goal, we purpose to ask forgiveness  
knowing that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

*Our signatures indicate our accountability to God for each of our words, our awareness of the lasting damage of an untamed tongue, and our commitment to the struggles and rewards of learning to give a good report.*

_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____	_____	Date _____



# AVOIDING A BAD REPORT . . .

- If your pastor made a decision which threatened to divide the membership of your church, and you were approached by one who wanted your opinion on the matter, what would you say?

## WRONG WAY:

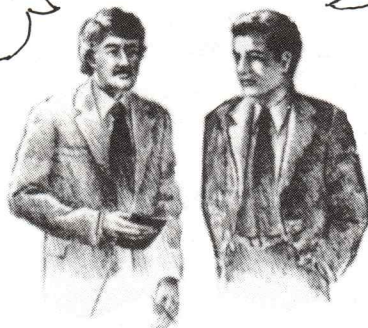
*Do you agree with the position that your pastor has taken on this matter?*



*No! I don't think he understands the problems or sees the whole picture!*

## RIGHT WAY:

*Do you agree with the position that your pastor has taken on this matter?*



*Rather than any of us making a public comment, it would be important for each one involved to privately discuss the matter with the pastor.*

# **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SIGNING THE AGREEMENT OF GIVING A GOOD REPORT**

- Heads of families, churches, schools, businesses and other organizations who wish to adopt the policy of giving a good report should carefully study these questions and answers and any others which come up in discussion. One could be appointed to record situations which arise and ways in which the principles of Scripture were applied.

## **A. COMMITTING MYSELF TO THE GOAL OF GIVING A GOOD REPORT**

### **1. IS THIS A VOW?**

This is a statement of intent; it is not a vow. The value of making such a commitment is that it establishes a course of action in our mind before a situation arises. By purposing ahead of time, our minds are free from indecision and we are able to be creative in finding ways to do what we have already purposed to do.

### **2. WHY MUST I SIGN IT? CAN'T I JUST MENTALLY AGREE TO DO IT?**

Since the wrong use of our tongue involves other people, we should involve other people in helping us to control it. By signing the agreement we not only establish a permanent reminder to ourselves and gain reinforcement from others, but we also become an example to all those around us.

### **3. WHAT IF I BREAK THE AGREEMENT?**

It is assumed that we will break it. God assures us that our tongue is unruly and no man can tame it. Once we sign the agreement, however, all those who hear us will also know we have broken it. We must ask forgiveness of those we offend and those to whom we have been a bad example. Soon the urge to give a bad report will be overcome by the pain of having to ask forgiveness.

### **4. WHAT IS A "BAD REPORT"?**

It is using words, tonal patterns or facial expressions to put someone else in a bad light. It is damaging someone else's reputation with information that does not need to be shared. It is encouraging or spreading discontent or discord among others. Even if I am responsible to give negative information, it will be a bad report if I do not first go to the offender privately according to Scripture with the motive of restoring him.

## **5. WHO SHOULD SIGN THE AGREEMENT?**

The head of each home is encouraged to go over this material carefully with his family. He should then allow each one to share with him any fears or questions they have about signing this agreement.

The certificate should be signed only when everyone agrees to it. No one should be forced to sign it. If one member of the family hesitates to participate, the rest of the family should also wait. However, they can begin immediately to practice the principle of giving a good report.

A group of friends, members of a church, business or organization may want to use this as a covenant among themselves.

## **6. HOW NECESSARY IS IT TO ASK FORGIVENESS FOR GIVING A BAD REPORT?**

The person we give a bad report about will learn of it. Jesus assured us “. . . *that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops*” (Luke 12:3). When he hears, his spirit will be grieved and resistance against us will be formed.

When we ask forgiveness from him, fellowship is restored and the way is cleared to discuss the offense which prompted the bad report. It is important to ask those who heard the bad report to forgive us. This stops them from repeating it and challenges them to give only a good report as well.

## **7. HOW DO I ASK FORGIVENESS?**

More important than our words is the sincerity of our heart. It may be appropriate to go first to the ones who heard us give a bad report and say, “God has convicted me about what I said to you the other day concerning (name of person). I was wrong in giving a bad report and I’ve purposed to ask him to forgive me. Would you also forgive me?”

Asking forgiveness of the one about whom we spoke is much more difficult. It is important to identify the wrong attitudes which prompted the bad report. For example, “I have been wrong in having a spirit of jealousy toward you and I know I’ve reflected this attitude to others. I have asked them to forgive me and I would be so grateful if you would forgive me, too.”

- “*These . . . things doth the Lord hate . . . He that soweth discord among brethren*” (Proverbs 6:16,19).

## **B. REMAINING SILENT IF I CANNOT GIVE A GOOD REPORT**

### **1. WHAT IF SOMEONE ASKS ME FOR A BAD REPORT?**

We are not to be overcome by evil but we are to take the offensive and overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Accordingly, when someone asks us for a bad report about another person, we should give them a good report instead.

If they urge us any further we can use this as an ideal opportunity to explain our commitment to the goal of giving only a good report of others.

## **2. WHAT IF I AM REQUIRED TO GIVE A RECOMMENDATION WHICH WILL BE NEGATIVE?**

In this case, ask the one requiring the report if you could first discuss it with the other person. This would give an opportunity to approach that person privately and assure him of your desire to give a good report. You could then discuss with him what would hinder your giving a good report of him and his work. His willingness to work on those areas should be the framework in which you give your report.

## **3. HOW CAN I STOP SOMEONE FROM GIVING A BAD REPORT TO ME?**

As soon as we realize that someone is giving us a bad report we should lovingly ask him if he has gone to the person yet. If he has, we could then ask, "Are you telling me so I can go with you to help restore him?"

Another response would be to interrupt him with the question, "Do you feel I am responsible to know about this? I would rather not hear it unless I am directly involved."

Another method to stop a bad report is given in Proverbs 25:23. It explains that as the north wind drives away rain, so a grieved countenance drives away a backbiting tongue.

- ". . . A whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28).

## **C. GOING TO AN OFFENDER PRIVATELY IN ORDER TO GIVE A GOOD REPORT**

### **1. WHEN IS IT MY RESPONSIBILITY TO APPROACH AN OFFENDER?**

When we must give a public statement about a person and we are not able to give a good report, it is then our responsibility to go to him privately in an attempt to restore him.

### **2. WHAT IF I DO NOT FEEL I AM ABLE TO APPROACH AN OFFENDER?**

Our sense of inadequacy may be well-founded. Before we go to an offender we must first thoroughly examine our own lives. We must discern the root cause which led to the offense and determine if we are guilty of the same root problem, such as pride, lack of love, insensitivity, jealousy, guilt, bitterness, etc.

If we have conquered a similar root problem we will be able to help him follow the same steps. If we have *not* gained victory, then God may be using his offense to remind us to work on this area ourselves.

*" . . . First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).*

### **3. WHAT OFFENSES SHOULD PROMPT ME TO GO TO ANOTHER?**

The level of friendship or responsibility we have with another person would have a bearing on the type of offenses that would cause us to go to him. Behind each of these levels of friendship there are certain offenses that cause a break in the fellowship. These would be the ones that require us to go to another.

Personal thoughtlessness may break the spirit of a close friendship. Incompetence may break the fellowship in a business. The offenses listed in I Corinthians 5:11 would break the fellowship among Christians since we are told not even to eat with a Christian who persists in any one of them.

### **4. HOW WOULD I APPROACH AN OLDER PERSON OR A CHRISTIAN LEADER?**

Once again our attitude is of greatest importance. Scripture warns, "*Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father . . .*" (I Timothy 5:1). This verse gives both the attitude and the method of approaching an older person or a leader. We must come as a learner and as his servant. We must appeal to him on the basis of what is best for him, not what is offending us. He must be aware that we are committed to the goals that he has and that we are sincerely desiring to assist him in reaching those goals.

### **5. WHAT DO I SAY WHEN I APPROACH AN OFFENDER?**

First, we should reassure him that we are committed to the goal of giving a good report about him and that there is one area that we are not sure we understand or that would hinder us from giving such a report. Would he be willing to clarify it for us? When another person is convinced of our love, sincerity and loyalty, there will not be the reaction that would otherwise accompany such an approach.



• "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).

**BASIC GUIDES TO TAME THE TONGUE**

**DISCERNMENT vs. JUDGMENT**

**REPROVING vs. REVILING**

**CERTIFICATE OF GIVING A GOOD REPORT**

**TWELVE "TONGUE TAMERS"**

**8-FOLD TEST TO TAME THE TONGUE**

# GIVING A BAD REPORT WITHOUT WORDS

• We are capable of expressing far more through our facial expressions, tonal patterns, and gestures than we do through our words. Often we fail to realize what we are actually "saying" by these means of communication.

<b>UNSPOKEN EXPRESSION</b>	<b>POSSIBLE TRANSLATION BY OTHERS</b>
• Yawning loudly while another individual is speaking →	"I am tired of listening to you."
• Failing to acknowledge one who greets you →	"You are not important to me."
• Slouching in a classroom chair →	"I am really here against my will."
• Looking at a watch or clock while someone is speaking to you →	"I think you have already talked too long."
• Tapping with fingers or pen while someone else is speaking →	"How much longer do I have to endure this?"
• Running in church →	"I do not respect God either."
• Frowning at the dinner your mother prepared →	"You have no right to fix something that I do not like."
• Listening to one who whispers to you while someone else is talking →	"I do not respect you as much as the one who is whispering to me."
• Gazing around the room during a message →	"What you are saying is not important for me to hear."
• Frowning at the one who is speaking →	"Are you sure you know what you are talking about?"
• Making sloppy clothes your normal attire →	"I do not think much of the way God made me."
• Continuing to watch T.V. when visitors have arrived →	"Why did you have to bother me now?"

• Do you know what attitudes you are silently communicating through your actions?

*"What man is he that desireth life . . . Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Psalm 34:12-13).*

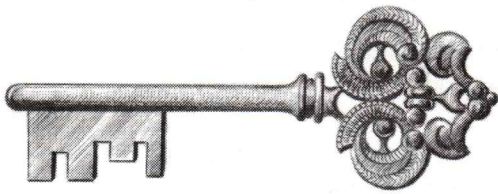
# HOW TO DETECT AND RESPOND TO A BAD REPORT

• We tend to enjoy listening to bad reports. The interest we have in listening to them is prompted by the same motives others have in telling them.  
To stop others from giving bad reports, we must first examine and correct the following wrong motives in our own hearts.

<b>INVITATION TO A BAD REPORT</b>	<b>MOTIVATIONS FOR LISTENING</b>	<b>RESPONSES TO HIS NEEDS</b>
<p>“Let me tell you how my wife hurt me and see if you don’t agree that I was right in leaving her.”</p>	<p><u>Pride</u> in having superior wisdom to judge difficult conflicts.</p> <p><u>Desire for their approval</u> by agreeing with their conclusion.</p> <p><u>Curiosity for facts</u> about the private lives of others.</p>	<p><b>NEED TO REMOVE GUILT</b></p> <p>“Rather than your telling me how she hurt you, may I ask you a question? Do you feel that you have fully cleared your conscience with her for any hurts you may have caused her in the past?”</p> <p><b>NEED TO REMOVE BITTERNESS</b></p> <p>“Rather than your telling me how she has hurt you, I would be very interested in knowing whether you have been able to fully forgive her for whatever she may have done.”</p> <p><b>NEED TO RESTORE OFFENDER</b></p> <p>“Rather than talking about the past, do you desire to do whatever you can to help your wife gain God’s best for her life?”</p>

<b>INVITATION TO A BAD REPORT</b>	<b>MOTIVATIONS FOR LISTENING</b>	<b>RESPONSES TO HIS NEEDS</b>
<p>“Someone accused your husband of doing something that I just cannot believe he would ever do.”</p>	<p><u>Desire to know</u> all the facts that may affect her life and family.</p> <p><u>Desire to protect</u> her husband and defend the family’s reputation.</p> <p><u>Fear of losing</u> something which may be the basis of her security.</p>	<p><b>NEED TO ASSURE THEM OF YOUR ACCEPTANCE</b></p> <p>“I am grateful for your confidence in my husband and I know he would appreciate learning what you have heard rather than my hearing it first.”</p> <p><b>NEED TO REMOVE DOUBTS</b></p> <p>“Perhaps it would be best for you to privately discuss this with my husband so you can go back to the one who told you and clarify the facts.”</p>
<p>“I just saw the head deacon do something really wrong. Do you think I should tell the pastor?”</p>	<p><u>Desire to learn</u> about the failures of a spiritual leader so that I do not feel as bad about my own weakness.</p> <p><u>Security of knowing</u> that I am on the “inside” because I have detailed information that others do not have.</p>	<p><b>NEED TO STOP A WHISPERER</b></p> <p>“It would be so much better for you to discuss this question with the head deacon before sharing it with me or anyone else.”</p> <p><b>NEED TO CHECK THE FACTS</b></p> <p>“Before discussing the matter with me, have you made sure all the facts have been checked out with the head deacon?”</p> <p><b>NEED FOR RESTORATION</b></p> <p>“Do you suppose God allowed you to see this sin so you could privately go to him and help him correct it?”</p>

# TAMING OUR WORDS BY GUARDING OUR THOUGHTS



• The key to taming our tongue is controlling the thoughts of our heart. Our thoughts include more than facts. They include concepts—structures of information on which we base our decisions and our words.

It is for this reason that God warns us to guard our heart with all diligence so that we do not allow false concepts to form within us.

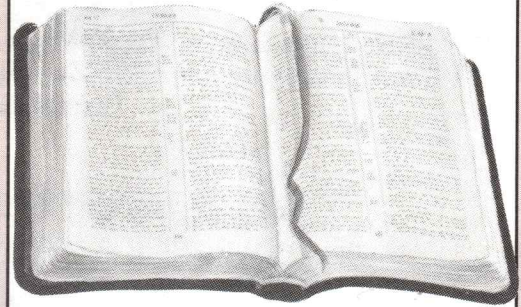
<b>ILLUSTRATIONS OF FALSE CONCEPTS</b>	<b>TRUE CONCEPTS</b>
<b>SELF-IMAGE:</b> "My appearance and basic abilities are solely the result of the factors of heredity."	God fashioned me in His mind from the foundation of the world and prescribed for me the unchangeable features that would best achieve His purposes in me.
<b>AUTHORITY:</b> "When I reach a certain age I will not have to listen to my parents any longer."	By learning to discern and obey the wishes of my parents I earn their trust to make right decisions and gain the benefit of their continuing counsel. But by getting out from under their authority I expose myself to destructive temptations.
<b>CONSCIENCE:</b> "My offense toward him was really quite small and he has no right to be that hurt about it."	What I consider a little offense is actually a huge "beam" in the eye of the one I offended.
<b>RIGHTS:</b> "By getting angry when someone violates my rights I will teach him to respect me and not do it again."	My anger is God's alarm system to let me know that there is some personal right that I have not given to Him, or that I have tried to take back from Him.
<b>MORAL FREEDOM:</b> "There is value to be gained by experiencing moral impurity because it will cause me to be more appreciative of spiritual matters."	Moral impurity dulls my spiritual senses and shrinks the spiritual capacity of my soul.
<b>MEDITATION:</b> "I should learn all I can about the philosophies of the world so I can convince those who believe in them how false they are."	A man's morality dictates his philosophy and theology and therefore I must saturate my mind with Scripture so I can give lasting solutions to moral conflicts.
<b>FRIENDSHIPS:</b> "I am lonely because I do not have the company of friends to enjoy."	Loneliness is primarily the result of not knowing how to enjoy God's company when I am alone.
<b>MARRIAGE:</b> "The longer I wait to get married, the fewer choices there will be."	Since God is preparing the right partner, the number of "possibilities" makes no difference at all.

# GUARDING OUR THOUGHTS WITH GOD'S TRUTH

- The most important things we say every day are the things we say to ourselves. It is important to understand that our spirit is communing with our soul and our soul with our spirit.

The following diagram indicates the type of communication that God calls for in Psalm 4:4 and 15:2—to commune with our heart and to speak the truth in our heart.

## OUR SPIRIT



### INTELLECT

- "My appearance is solely the result of heredity."
- "My offense toward him does not give him the right to be that hurt."
- "By filling my mind with false philosophies I can convince non-Christians."

• "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me . . ." (Psalm 119:73).

• "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

• "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27).

### EMOTIONS

- "I am angry because my rights were violated."
- "I feel lonely because I do not have friends."
- "I fear that the longer I wait for marriage the fewer choices there will be."

• "The meek (those who yield their rights) will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9).

• "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4).

• "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness . . . Take therefore no thought for the morrow . . ." (Matthew 6:33-34).

### WILL

- "When I reach a certain age I will stop listening to my parents."
- "I will be impure, but that will increase my spiritual appreciation."

• "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22).

• "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm 106:15).

# DISCERNING FALSE CONCEPTS

- Can you discern a subtle attack on the authority of Scripture in the following statement?

**“A SYSTEM OF LEGALISM RESULTS WHEN WE EMPHASIZE THE STANDARDS OF GOD RATHER THAN THE LOVE OF GOD.”**

- Every false concept is dangerous, but those which challenge the authority of Scripture are the most destructive of all.

To discern the error of this concept we must first understand the true meaning of “legalism” and the true source of our spiritual energy.

## DEFINITION OF LEGALISM

Legalism is trying to earn our own salvation by keeping the Law of God, or trying to live the Christian life in the energy of the flesh. Neither of these is acceptable to God. “. . . *By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*” (Galatians 2:16). “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

## SOURCE OF POWER

Grace is the dynamic force which God gives to every person to fulfill His will. Grace is given to a non-Christian to repent and to receive the gift of eternal salvation. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith . . .*” (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is given to the Christian to grow to maturity. If he responds to the grace God gives, God will give more. If he resists, he will experience the consequences of bitterness, greed, and moral impurity (Hebrews 12:15–17). God gives grace to the humble.

To say that an emphasis on the standards of God will result in a system of legalism is not only a misuse of the term “legalism,” but also a misunderstanding of the relationship between God’s standards and God’s love.

## TEST OF GENUINE LOVE

God does not separate His love from His commandments. In fact, Jesus evaluates a Christian’s love for Him by how well he keeps His commandments. “*If ye love me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). God does not expect us to keep them in our own energy but by His grace. Paul observed, “. . . *I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

## UNREALISTIC CONCERN

God’s love must be emphasized; however, since He associates His love with His commandments, it is not realistic to be concerned that one is emphasized more than the other.

To say that we should concentrate on the love of God and back away from the standards of God, lest we be in jeopardy of legalism, is to promote several false impressions.

## FALSE IMPRESSIONS

- First, there is the false impression that we have no further obligation to keep the moral law of God. Paul asks, “*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law*” (Romans 3:31).

- A second false impression is that God’s love and grace give the Christian license to do what he wants and that he is responsible to keep God’s moral law only if the Holy Spirit gives him a special prompting to do so. Even then, he is to do it only if he has the motivation of love.

The fact is that God’s Spirit is faithfully prompting every Christian to obey the standards of Scripture and is giving grace to Christians to enable them to do so. Our immaturity often hinders our ability to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so there is value in exhorting one another daily (with God’s standards) lest any of us “. . . *be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (Hebrews 3:13).

- A third false impression is that of associating self-control with legalism. Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23, and the very name that Jesus gives to His followers—disciples—emphasizes the importance of being “disciplined ones.”

“*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God . . .*” (1 John 4:1).