

**Strengthen your Brethren in all your conversation  
Outline – Mike Baird**

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## **Principles**

### ***Love your Neighbor***

- Matt 22:36-39  
    "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?  
    Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,  
    and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.  
    This is the first and great commandment.  
    And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
- John 13:34-35  
    "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I  
    have loved you, that ye also love one another.  
    By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one  
    to another."

### ***Strengthen one another in our conversations***

- D&C 108:7  
    "Therefore, strengthen your brethren ***in all your conversation***, in all  
    your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings"

## Not - "Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation"

### *Put downs do not strengthen in conversation*

- Much of the media we watch and listen to uses negative, cutting, or put down language for humor
- It has become fashionable in the work place and at schools to be considered witty and funny with clever put downs and cutting remarks
- It has become almost a form of peer pressure that we put down others

### **Put downs can have powerful effects**

- Mike Baird

"I remember as a young man my father telling me of an experience with his dad when he was a boy. His father was with some of his friends and one of them asked if my father was his son. He replied. 'yes, ain't he the \*&#@. My dad told me that he vowed that he would never ever say anything like that about his own son and he never has" (personal experience)

- Mike Baird

"Late in 1989 the company I was working for went out of business. I was at a company interviewing where I knew quite a few of the people there from working together at a previous company. I was out in the hall between interviews when a former colleague came to say hi to me. This colleague was a joker and was often the target of "putdown" jokes. I remember saying hi to him and then I made a comment to everyone around, trying to be funny, something like 'Well if Ronnie was hired here then anybody can get hired'. Everyone around laughed, including Ronnie but I saw the hurt in his eyes. I ended up working at a different company and so didn't see Ronnie for a long time. The look in his eyes haunted me ever since. Finally 20 years later (a few months ago at this writing) I had the opportunity to be at a reunion lunch where Ronnie was present. I was amazed to see that he was still treated the same as before – the target of put-down jokes by the others there. After the lunch as Ronnie was leaving I pulled him aside and reminded him of the occasion 20 years ago and apologized to him and asked his forgiveness. He gave it. While I still can see the hurt in his eyes from long ago it no longer haunts me but rather is a reminder to me to never put anyone down. " (personal experience)

## **"Just Joking"**

- Sometimes we try to cover our careless or thoughtless remarks with the phrase "I'm just joking" or "Just kidding" as if that makes what we said OK to say
- How do we feel when someone insults you or puts you down and is "just joking"?
- What does it say about us if we have to drag someone down to be funny or look better ourselves, what does that indicate about our thoughts and heart?
- If you ever find yourself saying "just joking" then you shouldn't have said it in the first place
- Is it something we can picture the savior doing?

## **Gossiping**

- Gossip is another form of conversation that does not uplift but only tears down

## **Ceaseless Pinpricking**

- Another form of conversation that does not strengthen is what President Kimball called "ceaseless pin pricking" (*Marriage and Divorce*, p. 19)
  - What images does "ceaseless pin pricking" conjure up?
  - Constant criticism can deflate any relationship - marriage, sibling, parent-child, missionary companionship, room mates
- Christ is the only perfect person
  - That means we all have married an imperfect person
  - That means our siblings are imperfect people
  - That means our missionary companion is imperfect
  - That means our parents are imperfect
  - That means our children are imperfect
  - That also means, and is harder to accept sometimes, that our spouse's spouse, our sibling's sibling, our child's parent, our parent's child, our room mate's room mate and our companion's companion is imperfect!
- Robert Bierstedt  
" The way we imagine ourselves to appear to another person is an essential element in our conception of ourselves. In other words, I am not what I think I am, and I am not what you think I am. I am what I think you think I am."

- We all tend to be painfully aware of our weaknesses and don't need to be frequently reminded of them
- Few people ever change from ceaseless pin pricking or nagging
- See "The Grapefruit Syndrome" at the end of this document
- The Savior taught
  - Matt 7:3-5
 

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?  
Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?  
Thou hypocrite, 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."
- Spencer W Kimball

"If each spouse submits to frequent self-analysis and measures his own imperfections by the yardstick of perfection and the Golden Rule, and if each spouse sets about to correct self in every deviation found by such analysis rather than to set about to correct the deviations in the other party, then transformation comes and happiness is the result (*Marriage and Divorce*, p. 19)
- Casting blame on others for problems in our relationships is an easy trap to fall into
- We need to look inward to avoid the "Grapefruit Syndrome"

## **Yes - "Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation"**

### ***Never Criticize***

- Steven D Dalton

"There is no such thing as 'constructive criticism' " (*Personal conversation*)
- Never criticize – particularly publicly
- Never, ever say anything negative about your spouse
- Never put down anyone
- We offend the Spirit when we put down others, when we constantly criticize, speak negatively or in a derogatory manner to or of others
- For the Strength of Youth Pamphlet:

"Do not insult others or put them down, even in joking. Speak kindly and positively about others so you can fulfill the Lord's commandment

to love one another. When you use good language, you invite the Spirit to be with you."

### ***Compliments & Gratitude***

- Give compliments
- Show gratitude
- Golden Rule implies that we should only say positive things of others
- D&C 121:  
"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;  
By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile"

### ***Parents and children***

- A responsibility parents have is to:
  - Teach their children correct principles
  - Correct their children when they make mistakes
  - Help their children to repent when they sin
  - See "Sins vs. Mistakes" by Mike Baird  
( <http://mikebaird.net/Church/GospelTopics/SinsVsMistakes.pdf> )
- *How* this is done relates to this topic not *whether* parents should or not.

## The Grapefruit Syndrome

By Lola B. Walters

My husband and I had been married about two years—just long enough for me to realize that he was a normal man rather than a knight on a white charger—when I read a magazine article recommending that married couples schedule regular talks to discuss, truthfully and candidly, the habits or mannerisms they find annoying in each other. The theory was that if the partners knew of such annoyances, they could correct them before resentful feelings developed. It made sense to me. I talked with my husband about the idea. After some hesitation, he agreed to give it a try.

As I recall, we were to name five things we found annoying, and I started off. After more than fifty years, I remember only my first complaint: grapefruit. I told him that I didn't like the way he ate grapefruit. He peeled it and ate it like an orange! Nobody else I knew ate grapefruit like that. Could a girl be expected to spend a lifetime, and even eternity, watching her husband eat grapefruit like an orange? Although I have forgotten them, I'm sure the rest of my complaints were similar.

After I finished, it was his turn to tell the things he disliked about me. Though it has been more than half a century, I still carry a mental image of my husband's handsome young face as he gathered his brows together in a thoughtful, puzzled frown and then looked at me with his large blue-gray eyes and said, "Well, to tell the truth, I can't think of anything I don't like about you, Honey."

Gasp.

I quickly turned my back, because I didn't know how to explain the tears that had filled my eyes and were running down my face. I had found fault with him over such trivial things as the way he ate grapefruit, while he hadn't even noticed any of my peculiar and no doubt annoying ways.

I wish I could say that this experience completely cured me of fault finding. It didn't. But it did make me aware early in my marriage that husbands and wives need to keep in perspective, and usually ignore, the small differences in their habits and personalities. Whenever I hear of married couples being incompatible, I always wonder if they are suffering from what I now call the Grapefruit Syndrome.