
THE GOOD NEWS GAZETTE

THINK ON THESE THINGS...

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

A SMALL VOICE WITH A BIG MESSAGE

A news report on bullying at a school in Canada caught my eye recently. The story began when a young high school girl in Alberta, Canada had her locker broken into at school. Her iPad stored there was used to post malicious things on her Facebook page including saying that she should kill herself. Caitlin's mom was reported to say, "I read the post and honestly, I felt like throwing up." It has to be sickening for a mom to read someone say such awful things about any child, especially the precious child you brought into the world. Why would someone urge another to end their life? Many just don't understand the meanness and bullying that goes on today, but the Bible tells us that it's not a new problem and why it happens. James 4:1-3 says, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight." Second Timothy 3:1-5 continues the theme saying, "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless,

unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power." Paul concludes this passage saying, "Have nothing to do with them."



Selfishness and evil behavior is abundant in our world. The Bible says that Satan prowls about seeking to destroy us. In John 8:44-45, he is called a murderer and the father of lies. Satan wants us to believe things that are not true in order to hurt, hamper, and destroy us. Bullying is just one of the tools he effectively uses. Mean and destructive words have seared into my soul by unthinking and unkind people as well as by

those that pro port to like and even love me. I remember a young girl I babysat saying, "You're ugly! You have pimples all over your face." I was shocked, hurt, and fifteen with

acne I couldn't cure. I assumed the little girl I babysat didn't know any better than to say something like that, but the words still stung.

I remember at various times in my childhood quoting the old saying in reply to those who said malicious things, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." This little ditty was a tool taught by parents, teachers and friends to help protect from the effect of unkind words from bullies and others, but it's not true. Words mean something. Words can and do hurt whether we want to acknowledge it or not. Words exert great and powerful impacts. The power and impact of words can be either for evil or for good. Proverbs 18:21 says, "The tongue has the power of life and death." In Genesis we see that by God's word the heavens, earth and all life were created. God said his creation was good. Jesus tells his disciples that if they have faith the size of a mustard seed, that they could say to a "mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move." Matthew 17:20-21. This is the positive power of words.



Caitlin's responses to the evil words of another on her Facebook page were powerful too. She chose to confront the negative things posted with something positive. Caitlin used standard Post-It notes to write positive and affirming statements for others. She spent the whole weekend and wrote for hours. When she was done, Caitlin placed the Post-It notes with her positive messages on every locker for every student in her school. Hundreds of Post-It notes greeted the students at their lockers that day saying

things like 'You are awesome.' 'You're a great friend.' and 'Love yourself.' Can you see in your mind's eye the colorful squares stretched out along the school's hallway on each and every locker? Can you imagine how the students felt to receive a special positive note as they began their school day? Unfortunately, the school authorities didn't get it. They were not pleased with her positive Post-Its and reprimanded her saying the notes were litter.

Even though Caitlin's mission wasn't appreciated by the school officials, parents who learned of Caitlin's deed formed a Facebook page called The Positive Post-It Campaign. In addition, a local bank heard of Caitlin's positive Post-Its and decided to continue the theme with co-workers throughout the bank. Encouraging and edifying fellow employees, the positive Post-Its were a hit. City officials in her town of Airdrie felt that Caitlin's positive Post-Its were such a good idea that they voted for a resolution making October 9th Positive Post-It Day. Lastly, the Canadian branch of 3M, makers of Post-Its, plans to help with the event next year, and the campaign Caitlin began may become a foundation.

I don't know anything about Caitlin or her life. I don't know if she is a Christian or not, but she has certainly acted out many of the commands Christians have been given in regard to how to handle bullying and difficult situations. For example in Ephesians 4:29 Paul instructs, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." That's what Caitlin did. Her communications were good for building up and giving grace. Wouldn't it be great if as a society in the United States we followed Paul's command and Caitlin's example? My mom taught that if I didn't have anything good to say that I should be "keep my mouth shut." I can't say I've fully mastered that instruction, but what if we all really did learn to think of positive ways to speak before the words crossed our lips?

Each and every day Daniel Kahneman (Nobel Prize winning scientist) says we have about 20,000 moments which we categorize as either positive, negative, or neutral. Studies at the University of Chicago performed by Dr. John Cacioppo reveal that

our brains have a natural, negativity bias. He showed that our brains are more sensitive to unpleasant information than to positive information. This explains why negative things have a greater impact on us. Politicians understand the power of negativity and that is why they use negative ads as very effective tools in their campaigns. The evening news is another example of how negativity sells, but it doesn't make us better or uplift us.

Scientists have studied the relationship between positive and negative interactions and their impact and have found that there is a "magic ratio" between positive and negative interactions in predicting outcomes in relationships at work and in marriages. A study of 700 newlyweds predicted with 94% accuracy at a ten year follow up whether a couple divorced or not. The initial study was based on scoring positive and negative interactions during a short 15 minute conversation between each husband and wife. Ninety-four percent accuracy in predicting divorce is amazing in any study! This study reveals how strongly the frequency and power of positive and negative words impact our day to day lives. If we really understood that the success or failure of our marriage and our career depended on how positive were in our interactions, how would that change our behavior? We have heard the stories on the news for years now of teens who have committed suicide because of the bullying and mean words said or written to them by peers. As Proverbs 18:21 says, "The tongue has the power of life and death." Many studies suggest a ratio of five positive interactions are needed to counter every one negative. My experience shows it often takes far more than five positives to balance a negative, because the negatives simply take on such a large emphasis in our brains. That being said, success in our marriages, our jobs, and relationships with family, friends and acquaintances depends heavily on how positive our interactions are.

With imagination, a mission of love, and hundreds of Post-It notes, one high school girl with one decision and one positive reaction to a bully changed her school, her community, her city, and in a real and positive way, is changing the world. Knowingly or not,

she acted out the scripture in Romans 12:14 that says, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them." If we can grasp the power and importance of the words we speak, I think we, like Caitlin, can make a positive difference in our world and in the lives of those with which we live, work, and encounter each day. I Peter 3:8-9 says, "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." Lastly, Romans 12:18 admonishes, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

All of us have a sphere of influence that no one else can touch and effect. I believe I can make a positive difference in my sphere of influence by being more positive and less negative. That is one reason why I write The Good News Gazette. I know you too can make a difference for good in your sphere of influence as well. I hope you will think on these things....

May God bless and guide you,

Robin Robbins House

Additional Scriptures To Review

James 3:8-10
 Proverbs 6:16-19
 Matthew 12:37
 Matthew 24:35
 Mark 8:38
 John 15:7



What Does the Bible Say?

What did Jesus say to the man sick with palsy/epilepsy?

What did the scribes think and say about Jesus' words?

What did Jesus ask the scribes?

What did Jesus do to show his authority?

What did the multitudes feel when they saw what Jesus did for the sick man?

Who did the people glorify?

What did Jesus say to Matthew?

What two groups of people came to sit down and eat with Jesus and his disciples?

What did Jesus mean when he said "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice"?

Why did Jesus say his disciples did not fast?

Why don't men put new wine in old wine skins, and what did Jesus mean by this example?

What did the ruler ask of Jesus?

Who touched the border of Jesus' garment?

How long had the woman been ill?

What made the woman whole?

What did Jesus say about the young girl?

What did Jesus ask the two blind men?

What did the dumb man do when the demon was cast out?

To what did the Pharisees attribute Jesus' power?

How did Jesus feel toward the people?

What did Jesus say about the harvest?



Answers to these questions can be found in Matthew chapter nine.

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