## WELL SAID

## A Word Fitly Spoken

**“*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver*.”**

(Prov. 25:11)

Interesting analogy, don’t you think? I love the very image this creates, picturing a basket of golden apples painted on a canvas and framed in a beautiful silver encasement to highlight it. Like viewing a portrait by a master artist (think Monet, Rembrandt, Van Gogh), that is what a properly placed word can do to change the entire environment.

For example, “***A soft answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger***” (Prov. 15:1).

How we say things, as much as what we say, often makes the difference in changing the mood of the moment. When the temperature in the room is rising to a boil by the heated conversation of two or more people, the thermostat can be almost miraculously turned back down to 70 by the calming soft answer of the other party. It takes two to start and inflame a debate, but the soft answer of one can immediately bring peace and restore order to the room. Think about it, you can raise the room temperature or you can lower it, all by your tone of voice and carefully chosen word. Apples of gold in settings of silver.

Another example. Think of the story of Abigail and Nabal her husband.

He was a stupid, selfish man (his very name means “fool”). David’s men had protected Nabal’s herds and families from invading thugs. David was now in need of help to feed his growing band of men. He asked the rich Nabal to give them some food for their service. He chose words that stirred up anger in David, who immediately armed himself for battle to kill the man and his entire family. Abigail got wind of it and went into action to remedy the situation, sending lots of food, and then speaking calming words to make David rethink his course of action. The end of her appeal to David ended with these words:

*“30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, 31 that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant.”*

It saved the day! Read I Samuel 25. Apples of gold in settings of silver.

Paul gave great counsel concerning how we speak to others. “***Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one***” (Col. 4:6).

Yes, sometimes you have to use the proverbial 2x4 between the eyes to get their attention. Jesus used very harsh words of “*woe to you hypocrites*” in Matthew 23. Paul had to get tough and speak rough to break the carnal thinking of the Corinthians (“*What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness*?” – I Cor. 4:21). All of our words as Christians do not have to be sugar-coated. Sometimes, in order to save a soul, we show “*compassion*” (Jude 22), *but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh* (Jude 23). Jesus and Paul got “down and dirty” when the occasion called for it, but all our of love for souls.

But most settings require “grace” and “salt” to make our words palatable, or easy to chew and swallow. Paul knew when to use hard words to “*reprove and rebuke*” (2 Tim. 4:2), but he also reminds us to be “***speaking the truth in love***” (Eph. 4:15). That is how we build up the body of Christ. Speak TRUTH, to be sure. But speak in LOVE.

Julie Andrews would say it like this, “a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down.”

Apples of gold in settings of silver.

A word fitly spoken. “Well said.”

* Rick