



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions Fitting In and Finding Friends Series, Lesson 19

Lesson Title: Putting Down Put Downs

Take Home Point: Build up others just as Jesus builds you up.

Warm-Up:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me." Whoever wrote that ditty must never have known any hurtful, malicious, or cruel words. Because it's not true. Words hurt, deeper than cuts and bruises. Deep down in the heart and soul. It may be as simple as a seemingly innocent nickname that puts down and isolates. The words may be deliberate barbs or berating, vicious attacks. They may be outwardly offhand jokes that actually are meant as true; you may pretend to laugh it off, but the hurtful damage remains. The words might not even be directed at you, but you overhear them between others or find out through the destruction path of gossip. I can remember being hurt by every one of these situations. How about you?

Read: Ephesians 4:29-32

Observation (What happened?):

What kind of words are we to speak?

Who gets upset, or grieved, when we have sinful attitudes, actions, and words?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why is it important to help others?

What should be our motivation for all attitudes, actions, and words?

Insight:

A popular symbol for Christians the past few years has been "WWJD" on bracelets, bumper stickers, t-shirts, Bible covers, and other places. "WWJD", of course, is the acronym for "What Would Jesus Do?". It's a good thought, and has been a source of inspiration for many people, but frankly it doesn't go far enough to the root of things. What in us always precedes words and actions even if we are not aware of it? Thought. Decision. So perhaps instead of WWJD, we should insist on "What Would Jesus Think?", WWJT, as a symbol of our devotion to Christ. For if we learn to think like Jesus, we will certainly learn to act like him. This is what is behind what Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:29-32. What are we to get rid of? Bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. These are attitudes as well as actions. What are we to be? Kind, compassionate, forgiving. These are attitudes. Each of us has a wonderful and unique opportunity to build up others, make them stronger, encourage them, and demonstrate their worth to us, by what we think and say and do in love.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

Who has hurt you with words that you need to forgive?

Think of someone you know who needs to be built up in their heart. Speak kind words or write a note to them this week.