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From God's perspective, "he that layeth up treasure for himself" is a fool (Luke 12:20). Why would one waste time and energy heaping up riches that he cannot keep? But can we honestly perceive if covetousness is warping our values?

Warnings in Scripture against covetousness abound. "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17). "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth" (Psalm 10:3). "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Do we despise covetousness as God does? Do we call it by the same names and view it in the same light?

What really is covetousness? A dictionary will define covetous as "excessively and culpably desirous of the possessions of another." But the Scriptures skip the "excessive" designation and simply interchanges covet with desire.

We are inclined to define a rich person as anyone who owns more than we do ourselves. But by this standard, compared to the majority of the world, most of us are very wealthy. To berate ourselves for living in a prosperous and peaceful economy is not wise. We must, however, "take heed to [ourselves], lest at any time [our] hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon [us] unawares" (Luke 21:34).

We know that God approves of personal ownership since He disapproves of wishing for what is another's. But greed drives the rich to despise and rob the poor. The poor, in turn, hate and steal from the rich. Class hatred is due to man's covetous nature, which afflicts the poor and the rich alike.

Covetousness is a heart problem. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). How can we guard our hearts from this sin?

Be content. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5). Contentment is a choice of faith. We choose to be satisfied with less so that we can give God more. Contentment is not a companion to laziness. Those who rest in God will work for God.

Be temperate. We do not need to live in a commune in order to curb covet-

ousness. Christians are community conscious and temper their spending for the sake of equality. We can help each other to live more plainly and simply by our example. Denying our wants for Christ's sake holds greater joy than indulgence.

Be liberal. Sacrificial giving is the opposite of coveting. The rich fool coveted to keep the abundance that God had entrusted to him. "Charge them that are rich in this world ... that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Timothy 6:17, 18). We lose nothing by giving to God, but we may lose all by hoarding it to ourselves. Even the best managers often fail this critical test. Good investments last for eternity.

Eliminate envy. This bitter fruit of coveting will rob us of the joy of life. Envy will blight our relationship with others and with God.

Be "rich toward God." When we focus on worship to God, the idols of this world lose their appeal. The time and energy invested in the heavenly kingdom will yield the greatest rewards. Life in the Spirit produces a positive attitude of rejoicing to serve our King.

The covetous are "enemies of the cross of Christ." They "mind earthly things." The covetous wage a war against the efforts of the church to identify and deal with carnality. These are those "whose God is their belly," their sporty pickup, their wardrobe, their hunting trip, their music, or their trucking rig. 'And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezekiel 33:31).

Covetousness may be detected by asking ourselves a few questions. Do we rejoice when others succeed or are we envious? Do we spend to be equal to or greater than others? Do we spend to make an impression? Do we admire wealthy people? Would we be willing to give all we have (or at least some of what we have) for the sake of the Gospel?

Avoiding the snare of covetousness will take conscious effort. We relate to this world on a daily basis. "Labour not to be rich" (Proverbs 23:4). "But rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28).

—BAS



"THE SWEETNESS OF THE LIPS INCREASETH LEARNING"

Proverbs 16:21

We use words every day to convey our thoughts. Some may twist their words to deceive or sugarcoat their words to flatter. But such words fail to increase learning of true wisdom. The Christian, who is a steward of true wisdom, is accountable to express words in ways that are uplifting and upbuilding. Sweet lips increase learning when they garnish truth with grace.

Our lips will be sweet when our words are graced with humility. As we live "in lowliness of mind," we will be able to "esteem other[s] better than [ourselves]" (Philippians 2:3). We will acknowledge that we are human and make mistakes just as others. Before we reprimand another, we will consider our own failures. Others can sense our attitude not only by the words we use but also by our tone of voice and our actions. Is it my habit to look up to others and commend their success instead of looking down and nagging at failures?

Our words will also express humility as we state appreciation for others' viewpoints. We will admit that another brother may have a more complete perspective or a better solution than we have. We will freely give credit to others. Pretense or promotion of personal agendas will be avoided. Sweet lips will promote truth and the good of others instead of self.

Our lips will be sweet when our words are extended with trust. How did Paul address his corrective letter to the Corinthians? "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). He recognized that God had begun a work in their lives and trusted that they would "come behind in no gift." Instead of tearing down another's reputation by adding criticism to doubt, we do well to extend trust in our brother's motive, allowing him to prove his character. Jesus extended the trust of salvation to us, giving us the opportunity to accept Him. Our children should hear words of trust as we pray that they would grow up to serve the Lord and the church.

Our lips will be sweet when our words are couched in love. When a certain ruler asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, "Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest." Jesus' words grieved him, yet they were spoken in love. Our children, when disciplined, will sense our love for them by a tone of compassion. Our brother can feel our love for him even if he needs to hear words that "rebuke with all authority." People whose personalities clash with ours will hear only gracious

words. The Christian will speak "the truth in love, [that others] may grow up into him in all things" (Ephesians 4:15).

Our lips will be sweet when our words are embedded with truth. "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth" (Ecclesiastes 12:10). We have a responsibility to seek out acceptable and upright words, specifically, words of truth. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6). Our words, when seasoned with the salt of truth, can give the doubting person an answer that meets the need of his heart. Truth will produce a reaction in people, either of obedience or denial. When our lips express truth, we extend an opportunity for our audience to develop appreciation for and adherence to truth.

A wise counselor will understand that interpersonal relationships involve multifaceted issues. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

Our lips will be sweet when our words are presented with authority. "The Son of man is as a man ... who ... gave authority to his servants" (Mark 13:34). Ministry, parents, and teachers have been delegated authority in their spheres. Every Christian has been entrusted with the authority of the Scriptures. We must recognize the authority that we are accountable to exercise, and believe it can produce results. The spirit of fear, expressed by apologies or mere suggestions, will fail to present the authority of truth. However, direct counsel, founded on the spirit "of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" will be more effective.

Our lips will be sweet when our words are conveyed in clarity. The truth of the Word of God will be enhanced when presented with clarity. "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air" (1 Corinthians 14:9). Public speakers should prepare sufficient notes to avoid filler statements and to present a focused exposition. Truth can be reinforced with clear and applicable illustrations such as the parable Nathan used to bring the truth home to David. Once David identified with the prophet's story, Nathan did not just hint at the lesson but drove the point home: "Thou art the man." Parents will clarify their expectations as they give their children specific commands and clear boundaries. Clarity will help our listeners to construe truth and understand direction.

Our lips will be sweet when our words are uplifting in hope. Words of despair can lead to depression and failure. Conversely, words of hope can en-

courage hope and success. Our children will be encouraged to obey if positive direction follows discipline. We can nurture our youth as we extend words of appreciation for the values they presently embrace. An emotionally weak person needs to hear our "pleasant words" of hope beyond themselves that will be "health to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24). The grieving crave our words of hope and comfort as they battle with temptations of despair and bitterness.

We encourage growth as we point our fellow pilgrims to a way up through salvation, victory, and eternal hope.

We are accountable for our words. Our words will either build or destroy. As we understand others' situations in light of truth, we can impart knowledge that increases learning. As we identify with the heart of another in love, we can share words that encourage and edify. Our lips will be sweet as we speak "with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Brother Jason



Respectful Communication Between Members and Ministry

Within the body of Christ, all human relationships should be at their best. But Satan is working to destroy relationships, and by neglect they will deteriorate. Good communication brings peace, harmony, and strength; but poor communication brings disunity, confusion, and weakness.

The New Testament instructs members and ministry to relate respectfully. "And he gave some, . . . evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Paul also testifies of "Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier.... Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death" (Philippians 2:25, 29-30). "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). What are some principles for effective communication?

God calls men to leadership in the body of Christ. The church leader is

called to follow Christ's example, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Therefore, this calling to Christian servanthood is the highest and most important calling in life. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). The church leader's accountability to God for the souls entrusted to his care is of major importance in his life. Therefore, his spiritual interests supersede his material interests. Every member should rest assured that ministers are appointed of God.

Our response will either enhance or hinder the work of the minister. Even Moses tired in his responsibilities and benefited from the support of Aaron and Hur. Yet many times the Israelites made leadership very difficult for Moses and provoked him "so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes" (Psalm 106:32). Yes, our leaders carry a heavy schedule with sermon preparation, visitation, and administrative duties in addition to family responsibilities. Both private prayers and family prayers should be made daily, holding them up to the throne of grace. Sincere appreciation for their preaching, their counsel, and their families' examples should be given from time to time.

The faithful minister should be received with much respect and be given due esteem. We need to remember that they are spiritual servants, laboring on our behalf. We should always speak respectfully of them. Parents should direct mealtime discussions to be kind toward and respectful of the leaders. When faults surface, they should be handled very carefully, always giving the leader the benefit of the doubt. Even young children will sense attitudes of either respect or suspicion and mistrust.

Rapt attention is another way to honor the minister as he preaches. Also, respect for their administrative decisions gives leaders due esteem, for they usually arrive at their decisions after much prayer and consultation with others.

The members should have a keen interest in the work of their ministering brethren. When a minister is absent due to preaching assignments or other church work, the place where he is serving should be announced. This is good for two reasons: it promotes accountability within the brotherhood, and the congregation can take to heart to pray for the minister in his work. After he returns, he should expect some to ask of his experiences. If he serves in a week of meetings not too far from home, he will be encouraged if some from his home congregation come to attend.

The ministry, along with the other members, can share together in many ways. The minister should try to meet as many members as he convenient-

ly can after each service. He may begin conversing of natural things but should shift the conversation to spiritual issues before it ends. He should have special concern for and an interest in the lambs of the flock and provide them with Christian nurture.

During the week, short phone calls are in order, perhaps asking the minister's advice on issues or asking for his prayers for a special need that has arisen. Members should feel welcome to inquire about issues confronting the church, such as technology, and to ask for advice.

Members have the duty and privilege of sharing materially with leaders. Ministers will appreciate a lift—especially those who have young families, financial obligations, medical bills, a mortgage, and taxes. Members also face these needs, but the minister's income is lower because of much time given in church work. Generally, financial giving is best given through church offerings designated for the ministry. Members may also donate items to his family or offer him a discount on purchases.

The membership should invite the minister and his family to a meal from time to time. The minister may need to travel alone for evening preaching assignments. Some of the fathers or young brethren may kindly offer transportation. The trip gives opportunity for upbuilding, spiritual communication. Such exchanges between the ministry and members help create a strong bond of Christian love.

When Christ (as the Head of the church), the ministry, and the members constitute a threefold cord, the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. Ministers, be thankful for faithful members who are supporting you daily in many ways. Members, thank God for loyal shepherds who are watching for your souls, that they may with joy give account unto God. May we never allow Satan to shut the door to edifying communication in the body of Christ.

Brother Roland



His Hand

When mountainsides are hard to climb,
His steadying hand is there.

When skies grow darker all the time,
His guiding hand is there.

When valleys dark are in the way,
His keeping hand is there.
When paths are rough from day to day,
His gentle hand is there.

When friends all turn away from me,
His loving hand is there.
When all alone I seem to be,
His faithful hand is there.

When in my path a crossroad lies,
His leading hand is there.
When doubts and fears within me rise,
His calming hand is there.

When sore temptations vex my soul,
His guarding hand is there.
When I turn back from heavens goal,
His seeking hand is there.

As trials come, I rise above
To meet my Lord in prayer.
His strength is equal to the task,
His hand is always there!

—*Sister Malinda*

Guarding the Moral Atmosphere of the Home

Our "last days" society is obsessed with the pursuit of self-centered, fleshly pleasure. As a result, many persons shamelessly glory in the shame of their nakedness. What was once rightly reserved for the sanctity and honor of the marriage bond is now flaunted publicly. Indecency is viewed as normal and even beneficial behavior by those "uninhibited" by the exclusive commitment of marriage. In this wilderness of corruption, God has placed Christian homes to be oases of purity and safety.

In this dark world, God's ageless standard of morality still rings with authority: "Be ye holy; for I am holy"! "Unto the pure all things are pure" (Titus 1:15). "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord" (1 Corinthians 6:13). Parents apply these verses as they guard and guide the natural curiosity of children, the perplexities and physical changes of adolescence, and the God-given attraction of youth toward those of the opposite gender. How can families today develop pure minds and consciences?

The display of affection in the home should be discreet. In a healthy parent-child interchange, a mother will cuddle her infant in her arms, a two-year-old will nestle against his parent's side to listen to a story, and an eight year-old will run into his father's embrace for protection from a vicious dog. But propriety would decree that a father refrain from greeting with a bear hug his mature daughter returning from Bible school and that a mother resist the urge to embrace her grown son as he leaves for a year in VS service.

Kind, appreciative words and thoughtful deeds by father and mother to and for each other and the family exemplify true love and contribute to an atmosphere of affection and purity. But a husband and wife who freely and frequently embrace and caress will encourage a lack of reserve in their children. One individual stated that when he glimpsed his parents kiss each other good-bye for the day, he felt that he had witnessed something too private. Those parents had conveyed a very precious concept of moral reserve coupled with genuine affection.

Properly covered bodies protect moral purity. Children should be taught the shame of nakedness at a young age. A mother is careful in modestly

nursing her infant and chooses a private place when older and male visitors are present. When the baby's diaper needs to be changed, it is done quickly while shielding the baby from curious little eyes.

The privacy of each child should be protected in the bathroom and bedroom. Parents should refuse to allow growing children to bathe together. Outside the bathroom and bedroom, the family members should be properly dressed. Children should be taught to tell their parents if others touch them indiscreetly in private places.

Proper decorum is also essential. Respectful posture and conduct in mixed settings should be required. Young girls should be taught to keep their dresses down, cover their knees and legs, and refrain from climbing trees and doing gymnastics with the boys. Young ladies may not sprawl on the sofa with legs uncovered. Such precautions guard the moral atmosphere in the home and develop good habits for propriety in more public settings.

The sleeping arrangement in the home needs parental guidance as well. Certainly, segregation should exist between the boys and the girls before they realize the difference between themselves. Separate bedrooms are essential. If this is not possible, a privacy barrier should be in place. Separate beds or bed rolls help to cultivate respect for each other's privacy. Blessed indeed is the child whose parents diligently provide an atmosphere of freedom from impure influences and conduct.

Parental supervision of children's play activities is critical. Children should not be allowed to play in secluded areas by themselves or play hide-and-seek out back in the dark. Parents cannot afford to ignore their children's activities just because they seem to be well behaved. Parental observation and direction to the place and content of play activities brings rest to parents and children alike.

Careful attention to conversations in the home is another pertinent responsibility of parents. Conversation regarding child bearing and its accompanying developments must be reserved. Little children ask innocent questions that need discreet answers. To share with younger children how and from where infants come gives them knowledge that they are not mature enough to handle discreetly. As children grow older and they approach adolescence, fathers with sons and mothers with daughters should wisely explain the changes that take place in their physical bodies.

However, this type of discussion is not material for family discussion or casual conversation among friends. One young lad stated that, when Father talked with him about these things, it seemed pure and good; but when his schoolmate talked about them, it seemed dirty. Normally, developing children are observant. If these observations are coupled with careful parental directions, a proper desire can be nurtured to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service." May we as parents ever seek the God of all wisdom to know how to provide a safe moral atmosphere in our homes.

Brother Wilmer



Church Committee Report Literature Evangelism

In the harvest field there is work to do,
For the grain is ripe, and the reapers few;
And the Master's voice bids the workers true
Heed the call that He gives today.

These words were penned by C. R. Blackwell many years ago. Today there are more ripe grains than ever before. Are the reapers few?

The committee is again planning four Boston street meeting trips this summer. Lord willing, the dates are June 7 and 8, June 28 and 29, July 19 and 20, and August 16 and 17. We again plan to assist the Flora congregation with a street meeting in Indianapolis on August 10. The Metter congregation also requests assistance in Atlanta in late September. When assisting Flora and Metter, we arrive in the city Saturday noon. The street meeting is held until approximately five o'clock. We then travel to their church area and spend the night with the church families. After the Sunday morning worship and noon fellowship meal, we travel home to Pennsylvania, arriving early Monday morning. If you would like to join us on any one of these trips, please call one of the committee as soon as possible. We appreciate volunteers; however, the established minimum is twenty years of age.

The committee now has a Tract Review Report available in booklet form to aid in your congregational tract work. This report is intended to help you

successfully and efficiently find the tracts that will best fit the audience you wish to reach. We will be providing a booklet for each congregation. Additional booklets (\$4.75 each) can be ordered from David Martin (Blue Rock Congregation).

We thank God for the open doors of the state and county prisons. In the past nine years, Prison Literature Evangelism has been able to send Bibles, books, Living Waters, Lamp & Light Correspondence Courses, tracts, and so forth to over five hundred prisons in the United States. Over thirty thousand Living Waters are mailed monthly to prisons. The cost of this effort amounted to \$28,897.99 in 2012. We praise God for the opportunity to reach prisoners with the Word of Life. Contributions toward this prison work can be sent to Prison Literature Evangelism at 40 Wood Corner Road, Ephrata, PA 17522.

Continue to pray that, as the printed page goes forth, seeking souls would find answers to their needs and be saved. *Brother Gerald*

"Labor on! Labor on!
Keep the bright reward in view;
For the Master has said He will strength renew;
Labor on till the close of day!"



Keys to a Clear Conscience (Part 4)

Keeping Commitments

"Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). God's people should be known to keep their word. We should mean what we say and say what we mean. We cannot have a clear conscience if we say one thing and do another.

We all make promises and commitments. We do not intend to be deceitful. Why would we not keep them? Many times, it is because we simply forgot. Perhaps we do not place a priority on keeping our word. Viewing unfaithfulness as God does would help us take personal responsibility.

This is not limited to formal vows and agreements but includes our every-

day commitments. We should not be known to be habitually late. If we agree to arrive at nine o'clock, we should make every effort to be there by that time. When the unforeseen arises, we should at least notify the other party. If we agree on a price for a job, we should not raise the price without good reason and the customer's consent. It would be better to shortchange ourselves than to be known to break our word.

In the past, a simple yes and a handshake were considered to be binding. It still is for God's people. The world requires an affidavit or an oath, but that still does not make people truthful. We need to carefully consider before we commit and then endeavor to fulfill.

We also make some public vows. When we were baptized, we renounced our carnal will and our sinful desires. Do we remember that commitment when we are tempted to sin? We also promised to be faithful to Christ and His Word until death. God and others are counting on us to be true.

Many of us have made marriage vows. We have promised to be faithful to each other as long as we both live. Society views these vows very lightly. They are broken many times simply because someone else seems more desirable. We dare not let the values of others weaken our commitment. Our lives should show others that God's way is right and that we intend to follow it.

What is the result of failing to keep our commitments? We teach our children that faithfulness and accountability are not important. We imply to others that our life and our plans are more important than theirs. The world is observing and expects us to be faithful. Our witness is marred and souls may be lost when we fail.

God expects faithfulness and He will hold us accountable. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deuteronomy 23:21).

—*Brother David*





PRAYER POINT

*“The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much”*

Thank God for virtuous mothers who are building their houses in wisdom
Proverbs 14:1

Thank God for the gift of the Holy Ghost who is given to everyone
who repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ
for the remission of sins.

Pray for the street meetings and literature distributions
planned for this summer.

Thank God for the promise of the two men in white apparel who said,
"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in
like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:11

Pray for the ordinations scheduled for this spring and summer.

