

Count To Ten?

Joe Slater

Few things bring us more regret than words we have spoken. Especially when a situation is heated by emotion, we tend to speak harshly rather than letting our speech be *“with grace, seasoned with salt”* (Colossians 4:6).

I remember a piece of advice: “Count to ten” before saying anything. Even ten might be insufficient, but the principle of thinking before speaking finds much support in Scripture.

“Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 29:20). That applies, by the way, to additional settings besides anger. Simple off-the-cuff remarks can devastate someone’s feelings even though you didn’t intend it.

But angry words are the culprit more often than not. An excellent song admonishes us: “Angry words, Oh, let them never from the tongue unbridled slip.” The writer obviously referred to James 1:26 where the Lord’s brother wrote, *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.”*

Just as a bridle controls a horse, we must control our tongue (i.e. our words). Hear again the wise King Solomon: *“A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back”* (Proverbs 29:11). Someone protests, “I was just speaking my mind!” Perhaps so, but might it not have been better if you had thought it through first?

“In a multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19).

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Ponder how valuable your soul must be for Satan to pursue it tirelessly and for the King to lay down His own life for it.

--J.J. Hendrix

Flash In The Pan

“The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away” (Matthew 13:20-21, NASU).

There are many who have a good beginning but fizzle out like cheap fireworks on the fourth of July. I know the feeling. When I start too many projects it becomes so hard to finish any of them. I am usually reading four books at a time, and some just don’t get finished.

Jesus knows that there are many who readily accept the gospel, yet when hard times hit, they fall away. He warns us of the dangers of not being faithful to the end. It’s like a man who failed to finish building a tower and was then ridiculed by observers (Luke 14:28-30).

The expression “flash in the pan” describes such a person. I’ve found two explanations for its origin. First, it may have come from the practice of miners panning for gold. As they washed the gravel, they recognized the gold by a yellow flash of light. But often the flicker was caused by other bright minerals, so “a flash in the pan” proved to be only an illusion. A better explanation is that it originated in the days of flintlock muskets. An inadequate flash of the primer in the pan of the musket would not explode the charge. So, a person who failed to live up to his promise came to be known as a “flash in the pan.”

Paul said at the close of his life that he had *“fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7). It was only then that he could claim a right to the crown of righteousness (v. 8). Jesus told His apostles, *“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved”* (Matthew 10:22).

It is not the one who will begin well, but the one who ends well, who will be rewarded. Let’s not be known as “flash in the pan” Christians.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

The Grace That Saves

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

During a recent Sunday service, the worship leader chose Amazing Grace as one of the song selections. While singing those familiar words that I’ve heard countless times, I made an accidental “slip-up” that added a completely new dimension to the hymn. Instead of singing about the amazing grace “that saved a wretch like me,” I found myself praising the amazing grace “that **saves** a wretch like me.”

As an English instructor, I often check essays for consistency in verb tenses. For example, it’s proper in an essay to introduce a subject in present tense and then to begin discussing the subject (such as a personal story) in the past tense. In the case of the hymn, the singer sings about God’s grace and how God’s grace saved the individual. However, God’s grace is not a one-time occurrence. It remains with the faithful child of God throughout life!

Grace is best defined as God’s undeserved and unmerited favor. Grace brings blessing and joy to faithful believers. Why does man need it? Because every living person *“has sinned and fallen short of God’s glory”* (Romans 3:23), and God extends grace to those who are humble and serve Him (James 4:6). Most importantly, Lord Jesus is *“the grace of God who brings salvation...”* (Titus 2:11). By obeying Lord Jesus, mankind can experience God’s grace first-hand.

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that SAVES a wretch like me!”

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)