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Smile For The Camera – Pt. 3

By Mark Gorman

I need to know the truth about me. James said that God's word is like a mirror that shows me the kind of man I am. I need to know the motive behind everything I do. Too often, we judge only the action, and not the motive behind the action, which is imminently more important.

An example of this is found in Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." All too often, we value only those who kiss us, and reject those who wound us - never realizing the motive behind the kiss.

A true friend will speak the truth in love. And sometimes the truth hurts, even when it is spoken in love. But if it hurts, remember that you are safer being wounded by a friend, than to be kissed by an enemy.

Because truth is a knife, it can be used to kill, or to perform surgery for the preservation of life. When a friend speaks the truth in love, he is using truth as a scalpel. Yes, it will produce a wound. But if we wait, the wound will produce healing. The question, again, is: "What is the motive behind the wound or the kiss?"

Some people have a skewed definition of loyalty. In their minds, loyalty is a kiss. Basically, they think that anyone who agrees with them is their friend. Many business leaders, and even pastors demand a "blind loyalty", which demands that everyone "kiss" them on a regular basis. By this, I mean, that they require everyone to agree with them at all times. If someone does not agree, they are thought of as disloyal.

True loyalty will risk an entire relationship to speak the truth in love, and hopefully salvage a friend from self-destruction. Paul said in Galatians 4:16, "Have I now become

your enemy by telling you the truth?” (NSRV)

I have learned to cherish the wounds inflicted by true friends. (No one enjoys being wounded. But if we are wise, we can appreciate the results of the wounds of a friend.) Proverbs 20:6, “Many proclaim themselves loyal, but who can find one worthy of trust.” (NSRV)

We must feel so safe with truth, that we can embrace it, anticipating the benefit we will derive from it. In Matthew 5:25, Jesus takes things a step further by saying, “Agree with thine adversary quickly...” Does that mean that I should agree with everything an adversary tells me? Absolutely not. But there have been times in my life when I have benefited from words of truth spoken in hurtful ways by those who wished to destroy me. It’s not easy, but I’m learning to appreciate truth, even when it is NOT spoken in love.

Believe me, it is NOT easy to do this. But I’ve asked God to help me to benefit, even from the harsh, hurtful words of spite and criticism, spoken by an enemy. Because I’ve found that, very often, there is some truth in the words of our critics.

No, they are definitely not speaking the truth in love. Do you remember how I said that truth is a knife?

When a friend uses truth in love, they use it as a scalpel, to perform surgery, to bring healing and to prolong my life.

But when an enemy uses truth, they use that knife to bring hurt, pain – to damage us. But before we rush to cover that wound, we would do well to take a moment to examine it, to see if the words they spoke, contained any truth. If so, then we should “glean” something from the hurtful words of our enemies. Because the only reason they could hurt us is because we were vulnerable. By exposing our vulnerabilities, they may have very likely, done us a favor, by identifying an area of weakness which needs to be strengthened – to even be corrected, in order for us to survive future attacks.

So, although they definitely did not intend to do so, our enemies often help us to become a better person – a better leader.

Remember, “**THAT WHICH DOESN’T KILL US, MAKES US STRONGER**”.

Psalm 141:5, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head...” Now let’s look at ourselves again. What are my motives? Yes, I did the right things, but did I do them for the right reasons? These are issues of the heart. We need to pray, as David prayed in Psalm 139:23 and 24 when he said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me...” This is the prayer of a man who wants truth - truth about himself. He understands that, after he has taken an introspective look at his life – his beliefs – his values – his priorities, he may have missed something which needs correction.

In this prayer, David gives us an example of how we should feel in regards to truth. He feels so safe with truth that he can petition God for a spiritual X-ray to reveal anything that would threaten his survival.

Lord, give us the same appreciation for truth.

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