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## **Your Breath Stinks By Mark Gorman**

Your breath stinks! Have you ever wanted to say that to someone? Why didn't you?

It's obvious that, if you were to tell someone, bluntly, that their breath stinks, you could easily offend them.

But, what if they were to ask you, "Does my breath stink?"

Or, what if their question was more general, "Is there anything about me that I need to change?"

What if they asked you that? Then, you could tell them, graciously, gently, "Now that you asked, I have noticed that there is an odor to your breath. You may want to ask a dentist about it. You may have a bad tooth, or something."

But even then, you can't say what you really wanted to say, "Yeah, your breath smells so bad that it's like some animal crawled into your mouth and died. Haven't you noticed that everyone who talks to you, ends up walking away, with their eyes watering? Honestly, your nose is just above the opening to your mouth! Do you expect me to believe that you haven't smelled the rank, foul odor that's pouring out of you, every time you open your mouth? Don't your lips burn, just from exposure to that toxic smell?"

Now, wasn't that fun? But remember, that is what we DON'T say. We WISH we could say it, but we DON'T!

But, getting back to our question, have you ever wished that someone would ask you, "Is there ANYTHING about me that I should change?"

I'll bet you are thinking of some people right now - people who REALLY need to ask SOMEONE that question, because you have an entire list of things they need to change - soon!

You know several things you would tell them, if they would only ask.

But it wouldn't be very kind for you to just walk up and start telling them all of this, unless they ask. So, you are kind enough not to say anything to them about any of their faults.

And you are so gracious that, you wait until they aren't anywhere near you when you talk about their faults. Now, isn't that kind of you - that you only talk about them behind their back, and that you aren't so unkind as to say it to their face?

HA! I hope we all know better than to talk about it AT ALL! And it is NOT kind to talk about them BEHIND THEIR BACK!

But, why don't they ask? Really - if they would ONLY ASK, you already know what they need to change!

So, now that I have your attention, let me ask you this: Have you asked anyone recently, if there is anything that YOU need to change about YOURSELF?

Ha Ha!

Yep, think about it! While you've been thinking of all the people who need to change, do you think that someone else may be thinking of you - of all things that you need to change?

Remember why you don't tell people? Why is it? It's because they didn't ASK.

So, what if someone in your life knows some things about you - things you really need to change - but they won't say it until you ask?

Who do you have in your life, who you respect so much, and you trust them enough, that you could ask them if you need to change, without fearing that they would use it as an opportunity to destroy you with their insensitive ranting about all your faults?

Do you have people in your life who you trust that much?

Would you feel safe, asking them?

Now, why is it that others haven't asked you? Is it them, or is it you? In other words, do they trust you enough, to know that you wouldn't use this as an opportunity to hurt them? Do they know, from experience, that you wouldn't humiliate them, but that you would do

everything possible to help them? Because I can't see them asking you, if they don't feel that safe with you.

Now, let me ask you again: Do you have people in your life who you trust enough, to ask them, "What do I need to change about myself?"

Because if you don't have anyone who you can go to in that regard, then you are about as good as you'll ever be, right now.

Why?

Because without that honest, clear feedback, you will likely go on thinking that you're ok, in every way.

And are you? Are you ok in every way? Are you certain that you have "maxed out" in every area of personal growth, in people skills, in everything which would enable you to be the absolute best and most successful that you can ever be?

One of my mentors says this: "There are two ways of learning: mistakes and mentors. Your friends love you the way you are. Your mentor loves you too much to let you stay as you are."

Who do you have in your life, who tells you the absolute truth about yourself? I guess the real question is, "Who has your permission to tell you the blunt, absolute truth about yourself? Have you asked ANYONE to be THAT honest with you?"

If you haven't done that, then the best you can ever hope to be is as good as you can look to yourself in the mirror. Why? Because you are your only mentor - you, yourself!

Proverbs 27:6 says "Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy." (NLT)

Think about that.

In our society, it seems that we identify our "friends" as anyone who kisses us, and our "enemies" are anyone who wounds us.

But this verse says that it is possible to be wounded by a friend, and to be kissed by an enemy.

That means that I should pay more attention to someone's MOTIVE, than to their ACTIONS.

Because their motive tells me who they are: friend or enemy.

I remember years ago, a friend who grew up in South Carolina told me, "We love you

enough to tell you when there's a booger hanging out of your nose!"

Now, that's love! It may embarrass you to have someone tell you that, but really, wouldn't you rather that they tell you, than to wait until a week later, and say, "I saw that, but I didn't want to tell you, in case I offended you." What does that mean? They let you go all day, looking like an idiot, rather than to whisper in your ear, and save you some embarrassment.

Is that totally their fault, or have you portrayed yourself to them as a person who is so "sensitive", that they can't ever tell you the blunt, honest truth?

I believe that we send out "signals" to those around us, to let them know if we are one of those "touch-me-not", delicate people. And, although we don't say the words, we say it with our attitudes, telling them that they can never be honest with us, because we are easily offended.

A few years ago, a dear friend, who is a business associate, asked me, "Mark, if I ever start acting like a jerk, would you love me enough to just say, 'Tommy, you're a jerk!'"

Do you give people that "license" for honesty with you?

I encourage you to seek out people in your life - people you can trust - who have already achieved, what you hope to achieve. And establish a relationship of honesty with them, which allows them to be honest with you.

But let me give you a little hint: Even after you've established those parameters in your relationship, you still need to go to them from time to time and ask, "Is there anything about me that I should change?" Because, although you gave them "blanket" permission to be honest with you, it is still difficult to say some of the "hard" things, unless you "re-open" that door.

I have a few people in my life who have asked me to be that honest with them. And, I've told them some of the "hard things". And I can tell you from experience, even though they opened that door, and gave you permission to be honest with them, there is still a lingering question, after you tell them the truth, a haunting feeling that you may have offended them, even though you told them the truth as delicately and gently as you knew how to do.

And my guess is that if I were not the type of person who would feel that way after telling them the blunt, honest truth, it is very likely that they would not have given me permission to be that honest and forthright with them about areas in their life which are in need of improvement.

I'm sorry I've gone so long with this week's teaching, but as you can see, this wasn't a topic which could be quickly addressed. We needed this extra bit of explanation to help "frame" this subject. And depending on what kind of response we get, I may teach more

on this topic next week.

You see, if we are to ever become great leaders, we must first admit to ourselves that we were NOT born GREAT. Anyone who IS great, became great. And no one becomes great by accident. You have to be "headed there".

So, if you and I are to ever become the person who others want to follow (A LEADER), we MUST admit to ourselves that we were NOT born a leader. And if we are to ever become a leader, we must embrace CHANGE.

And there is no greater proof of your willingness to embrace change, than an invitation for someone else to identify those areas in your life, which need change.

So, prove that you want to become a better person than you are today, by trusting someone else enough to ask them to be honest with you.

Remember, the wounds of a friend are more faithful than the kisses of an enemy.

Who loves ya,?

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