

Series: **STICKS AND STONES—Oct. 22, 2006**

**MAKING JEWELRY**  
**Proverbs 25:11-12**

**I. INTRO**

- A. I'll never forget my first serious entry into the world of jewelry. I mean, I'd ordered high school and university class rings and bought a few small things, but buying an engagement ring was totally different. I had to learn about carats, color, clarity—and the **big C—COST!** I had **no** idea! I learned that if you looked through a magnifying lens, and it looked like the diamond had spider webs in it—that wasn't a good thing.
- I eventually learned to avoid the jewelry stores that offered a free meal for two at The Hot Dog Shoppe or a set of the **Amazing Ginsu Knives** if you bought your ring at their store.
1. One salesperson absolutely amazed me. He was trying to sell me this 1 carat diamond with a visible black speck in it. He tried to tell me, "It's a nice big diamond. She'll never even **notice** the speck!" I thought, "Are you kidding? Lori has eyes like an eagle! This thing looks like a pickin' **mosquito** preserved in there—waiting to be harvested for Dino-DNA!
  2. I finally found the right diamond—and I couldn't see the kind of setting in the store that I liked—or, more accurately, Lori had **told** me to like. So, I described it. Drew him a picture—and he said he could make it for me. Well, my Dad went to take a look and told me it looked like a little toilet with a diamond on top. Scratch that plan!  
 -Well, we **finally** found the perfect ring. Of all places, we found it in Regina, SK—a little like finding opera in Punxsutawney.
  3. But as all guys know, the setting of the **moment** when you give the ring is almost—**almost** as important as the setting of the diamond.  
 -So, I planned all this out. On Feb. 13 at about 10 p.m., I got a ladder and climbed up to Lori's dorm window—and **sang** to her. I had to be really smitten to do that! Then I invited her to go out with me—which was forbidden by campus rules—that late, anyway. I took her out for something to eat. Given our limited budget, it was half a Big Mac and a donut.  
 -I had this perfect location to give this ring—and the perfect time. It was all going to come down at 12:05 a.m. on Valentine's Day in a little chapel in a place called Qu'appelle Valley. Darned if I could find the place! Lori was getting more and more frustrated with me! So, in the dark, out on this back road—I have **no idea** where—I asked Lori to marry me and offered her the ring! She said..."You gotta be **kidding me?!**" Actually, the ring **helped** the setting that day!
- B. Jewelry has actually been around for a long time. In fact, there are gorgeous pieces of jewelry preserved from 3000 BC in ancient Egypt. Of course, back then jewelry was--painstakingly made by specialists.  
 -Now, with that in mind, listen to how Solomon, the wisest and richest man of his day, compared words to jewelry: **The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry. And a wise friend's timely reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger (Prov. 25:11-12 Msg).**

-The short version would be, “There are times in life when saying the **right** word at the **right** time in the **right** way for the **right** reason is like slipping an engagement ring on the finger of someone you love.” And that’s what I want to talk about for a few minutes this morning.

## II. RIGHT WORDS...TIME...WAY...REASON

- A. In this series, Sticks and Stones, we have been talking about the things we say and the impact they have on others. John Maxwell, one of today’s great writers on leadership, once said that making a **good** decisions is more than making the right decision. He said a good decision is the right decision made at the right time. The right decision made at the wrong time can create a colossal mess.

-I thought about that in terms of what we say. That if what we say is going to fit Solomon’s criteria as a “custom made piece of jewelry,” then it needs to be the **right** word said in the **right** way, at the **right** time, for the **right** reason. Does that make sense?

1. Now, right up front, there are times in life when these criteria are not that big of deal. Like when you’re giving directions or ordering pizza. I mean, when you’re ordering pizza or giving directions, it’s not like you’re giving an acceptance speech an **Oscar**.

-But there are moments when saying the right thing at the right time in the right way has **huge** impact. Way more than we’d guess at the time. When I was in Pennsylvania, Tracee, a 15 or 16 year old girl in the church, began to get extremely thin and unhealthy. She eventually had to be admitted to a treatment center for *anorexia nervosa*. It took several years and thousands of dollars for her to find stability. Her struggle could be traced back to a single off-hand dumb comment her Dad made about her being “chunky” or something like that.

-God absolutely **treasures** people. And when our words scar their hearts—He takes that very seriously—just like He rewards us when we take the time to give them the right words at the right time.

**Careful words make for a careful life; careless talk may ruin everything (Proverbs 13:3 Msg.).**

2. Now, this is the question. What does the **right word**, the **careful** word look like? Think about jewelry for a minute. Jewelry is valuable. And it always has intentionality behind it. The actual translation of the verse we’ve been using from Proverbs about saying the right thing at the right time is, **A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver (Prov. 25:11 NIV)**.  
-Anyone here who could go down to your workshop and whip up apples of gold in settings of silver in 5 minutes? It would **take some thought, some care, and some time**. What the Bible is saying is—**Think! Use words carefully—especially in sensitive situations**. For example—when a relationship is strained, or you need to tell someone something they’re not exactly anxious to hear.
  - a. The Bible says that under those circumstances, it’s very important that your words be **just**. Fair. Accurate. Not sugar-coated—but not exaggerated.

-It also says that our words are to be gentle. ***A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15:1 NIV)***. Know when we're most tempted to violate this? It's when emotion—especially anger, or frustration is driving our words. As I mentioned last week, when we're angry, it's no longer about resolving the problem. Uh, uh! It's about winning, slam-dunking, shedding a little blood. And when we do this, it's like throwing gas on a fire—and you ***lose!***

- b. Another thought. In tough situations, ***less is more***, when it comes to words! Really. I read this verse last week: ***When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (Prov. 10:19 NIV)***. Say less—way less—than you're tempted to, and you'll be glad you did.
- c. Another quality ***right*** words have is ***kindness; love***. The fruit of the Spirit. The teaching of Jesus is that you and I ***never*** have an excuse to say, ***what's love got to do with it...got ta do with it!*** Listen to how the Bible defines love:

***Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (1 Cor. 13:4-8 NIV)***.

- 3. There's another instance when the ***right*** words can be like fine hand-crafted jewelry. It's when people are in some kind of pain. There's been a loss in their lives; they've screwed up; they've been rejected—or they're really worried and upset. In cases like this, what you say can either be like giving them a cup of cold water—or throwing a bucket of cold water ***at*** them!

-Remember Job's friends who came to visit him when his life fell apart? Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, and Dabgum the Teremite. Actually, the last one wasn't a friend—it just seemed to fit. They simply came and sat with him and grieved without saying a word. It's called ***shiva***. Know when they got in trouble? When they started talking. And it was because they were trying to ***fix*** him. You know, help him figure out ***why*** this was happening.

- a. Your ***right words*** in that setting may be ***no*** words, except, "I love you, I'm sorry, I care—and I ***don't*** know why." Friends, ***kindness*** and ***compassion*** are the apples of gold, the custom-made jewelry in this setting. Solomon said: ***An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up (Prov. 12:25 NIV)***.
- b. Kind words are ***potent***. You can literally change the course of someone's day—or life with one!

- 4. Let me mention one more setting. It's when someone has failed. If you've screwed up—you usually know it. And yet some "friends" act like they want to make ***sure*** you know it. They think God has called them to give you the bad puppy treatment: rub your nose in it.  
-The psychological term for this is ***shaming***—and it's extremely destructive and alienating.

- a. If you're the one who's dealing with a person who's failed—imitate Jesus. A woman fresh out of bed with someone else's husband was dropped right in front of him one day. Talk about **shame!**  
 -After confronting the people who dragged her there, Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you—go and sin no more." By the way, shaming someone, humiliating someone—makes them want to give up, not do better.  
 -Can I just say a word to parents? Sometimes kids do really messy things. And they need to face the consequences so they can learn. What they will remember about the situation is how **you** treat them. Whether love...or shaming comes through your mouth and eyes.
- You have a spouse that goofs up somehow? Whether you shame them—or give grace will set the tone for the future of your relationship.
- b. What about when you've goofed up? You've hurt someone you care about? I'll tell you what the **wrong** words are, "I'm sorry...**but...**" and then some excuse about why you're not as guilty as you look—and why they actually kinda deserved what you said or did. **Apt** words...the **right** words are words spoken with humility. "I'm guilty, I have no good excuse—will you forgive me." That's it. That's the **right** word in that setting.
5. Now, there are a **whole** bunch of settings that you and I need to think through; like when you get stopped by the police; like when you need to explain the birds and the bees to your precocious 8 year old daughter; like when your Aunt May asks you how you liked her lima bean, Velveeta and Spam casserole, when the dog inherited the whole thing.  
 -There are some situations where **winging it** doesn't cut it. There are some situations when, instead of **reacting** in anger, frustration or pain, you need to say, "I really need to think about this."
6. There are some other **rights** that you and I just need to briefly cover.
- a. For example, the **right time**. Timing is really important. And timing is not just when you feel the urge to speak—or dump. Humor can be a **great** thing. But humor at the **wrong** time is awful. Offering suggestions on why your friend's relationship blew up may be appropriate—but not when they've just been gutted.  
 -If you need to tell me that a message was awful, don't do it right after I give it. Wait at **least** 3 years—no, actually, just give me a little space. Do you get this concept of timing?
- b. Another really, really, **REALLY** important note on the right words...is in the right **way**. Your tone and body language communicates something like 90% of what you're trying to say. That's why it's disastrous to communicate problems or correction or criticism by email.  
 By the way, let's just agree to be relationally intelligent about email, okay? Are you tracking with me?  
 -Think about tone, for a minute, using one simple phrase: "What's your problem?" Or, "We had a great time." Go ahead; give me some options.

-Question: Anyone here ever seen a video or heard a tape of yourself when you're angry? If you haven't—then I can say that you have absolutely no idea what it's like standing in front of your face under circumstances like that. To get the tone thing *right*, you have to wait until you've cooled off and calmed down.

- B. Now, I want to talk a little more in-depth about another *right*. For the *right reason*. This is tricky, because it gets into motivation—and it's virtually impossible to know anyone else's motivation but your own. The bottom line question is: *Why* are you saying what you're saying. Is it for *your* benefit—or the benefit of the person you're talking to?
1. Let me illustrate. A salesman walks up to a guy in a place that sells expensive cars, and says, "I can tell just by looking at you that you are a person with excellent taste." Nice words, right tone, right time—*Why?*  
 -A guy sidles up to a beautiful girl in a bar, looks her in the eyes, and says, "I don't think I've ever seen anyone as stunning as you look tonight!" *Why? GUESS!*  
 -A teen walks up beside his Dad and says, "Have I ever told you how much I appreciate you—how I want to be a man just like you." *Why? Cause he's totally flipped!*
  2. Proverbs says:  
**Smooth talk from an evil heart is like glaze on cracked pottery (Prov. 26:23 Msg.).**  
**A flattering neighbor is up to no good; he's probably planning to take advantage of you (Prov 29:5 Msg.).**  
 -Imagine if I done all the things I did on Lori's and my engagement day, but Lori found out that the engagement ring was costume jewelry? By the way, Lori, I'm sorry I haven't told you until now... No, it's real. Words have to be authentic. If they're not—if you're brown-nosing, selling, or pretending to know more...or care more than you do—and it's really about your advantage or your sale or your self, then it's like giving someone fake jewelry. We *always* have to check our motivation. And self-interest of any kind is *never* good motivation.
- C. There's one other arena where saying the right thing at the right time in the right way for the right reason is tricky—but absolutely essential. It's when you're giving someone feedback or correction—or when you have to confront someone.  
 -I know—all the warning lights go off on this one...Ehh! Ehh! Ehh! Just *thinking* about that stuff gives some of you *Pepto-Bismol moment!* And there's a reason. When you compliment someone, say a kind, encouraging word, you can be pretty sure how it's going to turn out. But correcting someone? Confronting someone? You *know* it's not going to be a Happy Meal, Hallmark moment for them. It could be like lighting the fuse on a stick of dynamite, or teasing the lion at the zoo. And yet...and *yet...*Jesus asks us to do go *talk* to them. Not to dump your load and feel better—but for *their* sake; for the sake of the relationship.  
 Listen to what Jesus says—specifically—to do:  
**"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over (Matt.18:15 NIV)."**
1. This often gets interpreted from the original Greek as, "Go tell 3 or 4 or 10 of your closest friends so they can be just as upset as you?" Or, poll as many people as you can to see if they find it just as offensive as you did? Or save it up to use against them at a later date when you're *really* ticked.

-No, it's actually pretty clear. Jesus says, "Do what you really, **really** don't feel like doing—go and talk **to them about the issue.**" Jesus is brilliant. **Just between the two of you!** Your friendship is too important to just let it go.

2. Friends, this is where **how** you deal with it is a character-maker. There are several parts of the Bible that talk about **how** you do it. Paul says in Ephesians: **Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Eph. 4:29 NIV).**
  - There are some people who have absolutely **no** problem letting you know that you've upset their apple cart. They're in your face—angry, aggressive, and usually using words that draw blood. If you do that, you're doing the **right** thing in the **wrong** way with the **wrong** words for the **wrong** reason. You're just backing up the truck and dumping your load, Right? **Right?**
3. Let me just give some brief pointers on this.
  - a. First, get the anger out of it. Wait until you've calmed down. We've already talked about this—but if you march into a confrontation angry, it will be like throwing gas on a fire. Figure out what the **specific** issue is. And don't build a posse during this time.
  - b. Second, meet with them face to face—not over email or by letter. Email is **awful** when it comes to trying to resolve relational issues because there's less than 20% of the communication. That means you've left the other 80% up to guess work.
  - c. Don't accuse. Talk about your feelings, and then ask questions: "Can you help me understand what you said? Am I seeing this correctly? Your relationship is important to me—how can we fix it?" Then **listen. LISTEN!** The Bible says, be quick to...**listen!** Slow to **speak...** Slow to become **angry!** Proverbs says, **Answering before listening is both stupid and rude (Proverbs 18:13 Msg.)**
    - Go into a flammable situation like this accusing—and things will get worse in a hurry.
  - d. What if it doesn't work? Well, this passage says, **only** then, ask one or two other people to help. Not your posse—but someone you both can agree on.
    - This, friends, is exactly where some marriages break down. Two people who walked down an aisle together—deadlocked, red-faced, the relational tissue between them raw and bleeding. Then concluding that the only other option is divorce. This passage says, **Send up the trouble flares! Get help!**
  - e. There is one quality that is like oil in the gears in these situations. Humility. A willingness to own your stuff—not excuse it—and a willingness to say, "I could be wrong."
4. And humility has to work somewhere else in us. We have to be willing to see the feedback—and sometimes the confrontation of others—not as an attack, and poor us, and how **could** they think I was less than anything but perfect, and "you're not so hot, either, you know!" **wah! Wah! Wa-a-ah!**

-The wisdom of God in proverbs says that our response to rebuke says a *lot* about us. It says that mockers—wicked people—insult and abuse and hate those who rebuke them. Listen to the other side of it: **Rebuke** a wise man and he will love you. **Rebuke** a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge.

-Being rebuked isn't a bad thing. And we don't stop needing it when we turn 18. The alternative isn't pretty. It's learning...**the hard way! School of hard knocks. Two X Four University! Pain!** Why is it that we have such fragile egos that we can't hear honest feedback—and **grow?!**

-So, let's agree—and hold each other accountable around here—that we will not go underground with bad feelings; that we will be people who handle relational conflict in a God-honoring way! We will always, **always, ALWAYS** go to people, one on one, with humility, and try to understand what's happened; and listen. And then give them the **right** word in the **right** way at the **right** time, for the **right** reasons. And we will be **open** to others doing the same for us. Agreed?

### III. SETTING UP THE JEWELRY SHOP

- A. If we're going to right words in the right way to others—like a gift of custom-made jewelry, we're got to set up the **jewelry shop**. To help do that, I want to use a quote from Jesus that I used last week, and then do an experiment. Jesus said, in the context of the words that come out of our mouths:

**The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him (Matt. 12:35 NIV).**

1. Up here, I have several glasses filled with different kinds of stuff. A glass of water, a cup of mud, a bowl of spoiled milk. This is **extremely** scientific, so I need a dedicated volunteer. Anyone?

-Here's the deal, I'm going to see if the same thing happens consistently with different liquids in different containers to establish the accuracy of Jesus' words. I don't think Jesus would mind if we check to see if He's being truthful. I'll hold each container, you **bump my arm**, and let's see what comes out. The **water**, the **mud**, the **milk**.

-Wow! Amazing! Let's have a hand for Jesus! What's inside **any** container is what comes out when it gets bumped! When you bump water, mud doesn't come out. When you bump mud, water doesn't come out.

2. So, let's say you and I want the **right** words at the **right** time to come out of our mouths in the **right** way, for the **right** reason... **what do we need to do?**

-Well, according to Jesus, I suspect our hearts need to be cleaned up—and the shelves restocked. Lori and were watching America's Funniest Videos the other night, and there was a video of two guys wearing masks, cleaning out a refrigerator filled with rotten food. These guys would grab stuff, gagging and choking, then run out and throw it away.

-Sometimes good stuff, in our hearts, spoils. Goes bad. Sometimes our hearts are infected with anger and grudges and spoiled dreams and jealousy—and it infects everything else. The bad stuff needs to come out—and the shelves need to be re-stocked.

3. Paul writes:  
**Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted,**

**forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you (Eph. 4:31-32 NLT).**

-The **only** way to deal with this stuff and get it out of your heart is to confess it to God as sin, and ask the Holy Spirit to replace it with his love. Clean out the glass. Scrub it. Disinfect it.

-And then this stuff has to be replaced. To do that, the Holy Spirit has to help you **think** differently; **renew** your mind. What you think about, the thoughts you have about others will either restock the shelves with evil, rotting stuff—or with good things. See, in a jewelry shop, you have to have something to work with.

Philippians 4 says:

**Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse (Phil. 4:8 Msg).**

-If you think self-pitying, angry, grudge-filled, slanderous, lust-filled, suspicious thoughts about life and about people—that's what will slop over the top of your life when someone bumps you. You have to **stop** those thoughts, **confess** them as sin—as grieving to the Holy Spirit—and ask God to renew your mind and give you something to make jewelry with!

- B. Something else that's really important. Think before you speak. Think **hard**. Think with **relational intelligence**. Ask, **How would I feel if this was said to me?**
1. Some moments are so flammable that if you **don't** think, you're going to create a 5 alarm fire. Think!
  2. There are times when you will want to say the right words to a friend who's done something nice for you, or made a really classy move. Don't trust Hallmark, **think!** Make a **specific** comment, a **specific** compliment.  
-There are moments as a parent or a spouse when the word you say will shape your relationship for years to come. **Think!**
  3. If you have a friend in pain—swamped or crushed by life—you can make a difference. So **think**.
  4. There's something you need to know. Your reputation for how you use words will always go before you.  
How many of you are interested in having a good reputation? As someone who speaks **both** truthfully and graciously? The wisest man in the world said:  
**A wise person gets known for insight; gracious words add to one's reputation (Proverbs 16:21 Msg.)**
- C. I've thought about the times, over the years, when people have given me verbal jewelry.
1. One time was when I was 20 something traveling with a group representing the college I attended. One night we were negotiating when we would have to get up the next day to get to the beach, and I was strongly, obnoxiously advocating for a **later** start. I mean, after all, **I** know how long it would take to get there. The next

day as we were spending some time together, I said to the group, “You know, I sense some coldness and disunity here...” And all the eyes turned to me.

-That day, my heart broke as, one by one, they made it clear that my self-centeredness was the problem. I sat there—ashamed of myself—cried my eyes out—and asked their forgiveness. And then this professor who was traveling with us read these words:

**The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. (2 Cor. 2:6-8 NIV).**

-**Both** the rebuke—**and** the loving words were the right words at the right time, said in the right way for the right reasons. And I will never forget that moment as long as I live.

2. There was another time when I was the recipient words that were like custom-made jewelry. It was from this big, gaunt swarthy woman named Ruth Schwenk. Ruth was a really cool person, who traveled around using flannelgraph, magic, and story telling to get the message of Jesus to kids.

-At this camp I worked at, she held a Bible study for the teens. One of the things we remembered was her snort. She’d say something particularly profound—then **snort!** It really was quite funny.

-But what I remember most is the time she said to me, “Ken, I believe God wants to do something really special with your life.” Apples of gold in settings of silver—and I’ve never forgotten them. They helped shape my life—sometimes I’ve hung on to those words like a lifejacket.

#### IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

I’d like to give you a phrase that, if you imbed it in the part of you that does all the word-processing, can change the whole scope of your life—and have a transforming effect on this world. And that thought is: ***What is the most valuable thing I can say?*** What’s the right word? What’s the right time? What’s the right way to say this? Am I saying it for the right reason? And ask the Spirit of God, “Is this what **You** want me to say? And will **You** help?” If you do that—all will be well.

-So—***let’s go make some jewelry!***