

Before You Speak ...

I was without my car one day, so my son-in-law offered me his.

It was one of those new ones with a computer that tells you in words such things as “*you have left your lights on*”; “*you can travel miles at this speed before you run out of fuel*”; “*fasten your seatbelt.*”

As I was about to leave I asked my son-in-law if there was anything I needed to know about the car.

He answered, “*oh no, it's easy to drive.*”

The car was easy and a pleasure to drive.

When I arrived at my destination I parked and turned everything off and the computer said “*don't forget your key.*”

I started to pull the key but it would **not** come out.

“*Don't forget your key*” the computer said again.

So I started the engine again then turned it off expecting the key now to come out, but it didn't.

“*Don't forget your key*” said the computer.

“*Alright*” I said “*just give it to me and I won't forget it.*”

I was talking to a computer!!

I phoned my son-in-law and he told me to press a certain button to release the key, problem over.

The computer than said, sounding sincere, “*thank you.*”

Computers can be programmed to mechanically respond tactfully as the above example illustrates.

People, however, must be educated on how to relate to other people.

We have to learn to edit our responses before we utter them.

If we do this it will pay enormous dividends in our home, or at school, college and work.

Many times we respond improperly because we feel awkward or helpless in a certain situation.

Getting along with others involves learning to phrase statements in the most diplomatic way possible.

For example, a friend of mine was given a dreadful painting by his mother-in-law.

He looked at it, speechless for a moment, then recovered and said::

“*How thoughtful of you! This is something I would never have bought for myself, and I know just the place for it.*”

As his mother-in-law beamed with pleasure his bride grinned from ear to ear.

She was sending a silent message, “*sweetheart, you handled that masterfully, and I love you for it!*”

Another example, a newly married couple invited the wife’s parents to dinner. She had gone to great pains to make it a special evening.

As the parents were leaving, the mother said, “*we had a nice evening dear, and it was a lovely dinner, but the roast was a little overcooked.*”

Of course that spoiled the evening for her daughter.

Proverbs 12:18 [NIV] “*Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*”

What Solomon is saying is “*put your mind in gear before your tongue in motion.*”

That is good advice that will smooth over all difficult situations.

Following are ways you can avoid saying the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Run the statement or question through your mind first, then revise it so that it sounds just right.

The millions of brain cells you have can work incredibly fast, giving you plenty of time to monitor and rephrase what you are about to say, all in a split second.

It is wise to remember a positive compliment buys more goodwill than a negative complaint.

Following are statements that will win you endless enemies and alienate all your best friends.

“I tell you what I think you ought to do.”

“My advice to you is ...”

Such statements come across as insulting assumptions of superior wisdom.

Don’t offer unsolicited advice, it is seldom accepted.

“Let me show you where you went wrong.”

“I’m only telling you this for your own good.”

“Your whole problem, as I see it ...”

“You didn’t ask me for advice but ...”

There are thousands of awkward, clumsy, inappropriate phrases such as above, that a wise person will avoid like the plague.

The one I like most is, “*That was a fine ... [whatever] but there is this one thing I would have done a little differently.*”

Thanks for nothing.

Such a person may feel they are being helpful when they are not.

Job 32:8 [NIV] “*But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.*”

The human brain with its inbuilt human spirit has a billion cells and is able to handle some 15 trillion facts!

No man-made computer can ever match it.

What power our Creator God has placed at our disposal.

But as far as many human beings are concerned, this power remains largely untapped.

It goes without saying that many of the problems that beset human beings today is dealing with each other.

All these interpersonal problems could be avoided if we spent a little more time in advance thinking before we speak.

Proverbs 10:19-21 [Living Bible] *“Don’t talk too much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth. Be sensible and turn off the flow! When a good man speaks, he is worth listening to, but the words of fools are a dime a dozen. A godly man gives good advice, but a rebel is destroyed by lack of common sense.”*

When we think deeply before we speak then our words will be few but well worth listening to.

Philippians 2:3-4 [NIV] *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Such a humble attitude of mind will help you to think before you speak as your concern will be on the welfare of the person who is about to receive your words.