



grow. pray. study.

July 25, 2021 Influencers: Building others up

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:7-11, NRSV

Uplift with “wholesome speech”

MONDAY 7.26.21 Proverbs 15:1-4, 25:15

The Hebrew sages wrote down many of the Proverbs in a rather scattershot fashion. But in these four verses from Proverbs 15, they linked four wise sayings to address the impact of words, both to wound and damage or to uplift and give life. (Apart from Proverbs, the image of “the tree of life”—verse 4—only occurs in the archetypal Hebrew creation story in [Genesis 2 and 3](#) and in John the seer’s visions of God’s new earth in [Revelation 2 and 22](#).)

- The *Common English Bible* translates the Hebrew word in Proverbs 15:1 as “sensitive.” Other translations use “soft” or “gentle.” Some may think such words give an impression of weakness. But Proverbs 25 pointed to strength, saying, “A tender tongue can break a bone.” When have you seen sensitively chosen words break down barriers that harsh speech would only have made higher and more rigid?
- Professor Paul Koptak wrote, “These proverbs do more than simply urge us to watch what we say and how; they also inspire us to examine the intentions of our hearts.” * Have you ever found, when you were (maybe reluctantly) honest with yourself, that the inner sources of your “righteous indignation” or anger were not as purely “righteous” as you at first wished to think? Does meeting anger with more anger usually make things better or worse?

Prayer: God of wisdom, help my mouth not to “gush” with foolish words. Grow in me your spirit that can make my speech more and more a “tree of life” for the people I meet. Amen.

* Paul E. Koptak, *The NIV Application Commentary: Proverbs*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003, p. 408.

Uplift people with practical help

TUESDAY 7.27.21 Isaiah 58:5-10, James 2:14-17

Isaiah 58 spoke to Israelites whose many “religious” actions, including fasting, grew from self-serving motives (cf. also [Micah 6:6-8](#)). Why they asked, didn’t God honor their showy, external feasts and fasts? The prophet said they needed to “fast” from hurting other people. James, too, offered a vital lesson in what a faith-filled life looks like in practice. Pious words alone, he said, do not feed the hungry. We uplift others because our faith in God’s grace leads us to actively live out Jesus’ loving spirit.

- Fasting, whether from food or some other valued activity, is a helpful spiritual practice. But most Israelites' fasting only seemed to go skin-deep. [Isaiah 58:3-4](#) noted sadly that the pious “fasters” kept abusing their workers and fighting each other. How do verses 6-7 in today’s reading speak to your heart and your life today? What is one step you can take to make your spiritual practices truly life-changing, as the prophet called Israel to do?
- “Faith” does not mean sitting idle with our hands piously folded. Like the apostles, Methodism’s founder John Wesley taught that we serve God with our head, our heart and our hands, that true faith produces good actions. Working on Jesus’ behalf looks different than it did before Covid-19 changed our world. What creative ways have you found in the last 18 months to work for God and God’s people in ways that show your faith?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to fully accept your love and grace, so that it empowers and energizes me to keep uplifting all the people that I can in your loving spirit. Amen.

Uplift the young by valuing them

WEDNESDAY 7.28.21 1 Samuel 3:6-11, Mark 10:13-16, 1 Timothy 4:12

Samuel’s mother offered him to God’s service from birth (cf. [1 Samuel 1:20-28](#)). While he was still a boy, God called to him in an unusual way. Samuel didn’t know what to make of it at first, but the older priest Eli sensed that God was up to something. So Samuel listened to God—and kept on for the rest of his life. Jesus loved children, and children loved him. Mark said Jesus was angry with his stern, “grown-up” disciples. He welcomed the children, and Mark added the lovely detail that Jesus “hugged the children and blessed them.” And the apostle Paul uplifted young Timothy in his pastoral work.

- If we read on (cf. [1 Samuel 3:11-18](#)), we find that Samuel heard a message of divine judgment on Eli’s wicked sons, who immorally exploited their priestly position. It saddened and frightened Samuel, but he honestly told Eli the message. One vital key to hearing God (even inwardly) is being willing to take God seriously, to do what he commands. Can you recall a time when you needed to set aside your own plan(s) or wishes to follow what God wanted?
- When Jesus spoke about children, “in the ancient world emphasis would fall on the child’s lack of status. This requires a change of heart and life, away from concerns with prestige and status.” * What aspects of childlikeness and youth did Jesus’ enemies most need to be able to enter God’s Kingdom? Are there any of those aspects that you, too, want to ask God to help grow in your life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please keep me from ever-growing too old inside to welcome and uplift the joyous, trusting circle of children you welcomed. Keep my heart fresh, flexible and smiling as I follow you. Amen.

* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 18:1-4 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 39 NT.

Uplift the old and experienced by valuing them

THURSDAY 7.29.21 Psalm 71:15-19, Luke 2:25-38

Scholar John Goldingay said, “Psalm [71] talks in terms of ‘always’....In the past, ‘my praise has always been of you.’ In the present, I need you to be ‘a shelter to which I can always come.’ In the future, ‘I will hope always.’” * One plus of a long Godly life is more reasons for praise and faith. Luke said young Mary and Joseph brought their baby to the Temple. Aged Simeon (when he saw Jesus he told God, “Now let your servant go in peace”) and Anna, age 84, met them. The young couple didn’t brush the “old folks” off. Simeon and Anna didn’t see the parents as too young to parent the Messiah.

- When did you retire, or when do you picture yourself retiring? Many people in our culture tend to view retirement as nothing but a perpetual, self-indulgent vacation. The psalmist saw instead an ongoing responsibility, at all ages, to share God’s “wondrous deeds” with others, including especially younger people. How do you keep, or plan to keep, living out that purpose throughout your life span? (Find help and ideas at www.cor.org/crossroads.)
- Simeon hadn’t let himself become a “cranky old man.” Luke said he “eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel,” even though the mighty Roman army firmly controlled Judea, and Israel’s religious leaders often quarreled and were at times corrupt. How can you nurture an uplifting sense of “eager anticipation” about what God is doing today, through people of many ages and styles?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, at all the ages of my life, help me, like Anna, to serve you with worship, praise and a willingness to speak about Jesus. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1–72*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013, p. 222.

Uplift others by being present (and not as a stumbling block)

FRIDAY 7.30.21 John 14:15-18, 25-27, Romans 14:10-13, 17

After saying he would leave (cf. [John 13:33](#)), Jesus assured his disciples that they would not lose his presence. Sending the “Companion,” the Holy Spirit, wasn’t about technical theology, but a pledge of his presence: “I will come to you....My peace I give you.” Paul named issues the Christians in Rome had in uplifting each other. They fought over differences about diet or sacred days. Paul said God’s kingdom is about “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Dividing over lesser issues didn’t uplift others but made them stumble.

- The “fight or flight” response to danger seems to be hard-wired into our brains. Do you believe Jesus’ promise of peace meant he wipes that response out, or that he gives us a better way to deal with it when something triggers it? Are there dark places of fear and anxiety in your life today? How can Christ’s loving, caring presence uplift your heart and mind to live in the peace he came to give you?
- “Let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up” (Romans 14:19). What attitudes and actions uplift and build up other members of your family, church, neighborhood or workplace by bringing peace? Are some of those attitudes and actions practically second nature for you? In which do you want to grow stronger, with the Holy Spirit’s help?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me a peace that isn’t temporary, that nothing can take away from me. Now please help me to live into that uplifting peace more each day. Amen.

Uplift people in every way

SATURDAY 7.31.21 Ephesians 4:25-32

These verses set out a challenging standard for all of us who claim to follow Jesus. They call on us to live by a simple (but not easy) guideline: “Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community.” Often we find it harder to live that way when someone else does something differently from the way we do it, or would like to see it done. But it is precisely at those times of change, when stress and tension tend to rise, that the guidelines in today’s reading become most crucial for all of us to live into. We aim to be a community in which we “Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say.”

- Scholar William Barclay wrote, “Paul...tells us to be kind (*chrēstos*). The Greeks defined this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbour’s affairs as it does of its own. He tells us to forgive others as God forgave us. So, in one sentence, Paul lays down the law of personal relationships—that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us.” * Pastor Hamilton described a sad fact we’ve all seen. He used the ironic but truthful chapter title, “When Christians are Unchristian.” ** Yet our ideal is to treat one another “in the same way God forgave you in Christ.” Have you learned ways to “be angry without sinning” (verse 26)? What steps can help you grow a character strong enough to treat others as God treats you? How can the Holy Spirit help you discern when you can and should speak the truth without being unchristian? Which of your attitudes already live up to this standard? In which do you see the most room for growth?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your gracious acceptance has given me life. Give me the courage to speak truth in love and the humility to say I’m sorry when I’m wrong. Let me regularly uplift those around me. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 160.

** Adam Hamilton, *When Christians Get It Wrong*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010 and 2013, chapter 1.

Prayer Requests – [cor.org/prayer](https://www.cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Please pray for our church family members who are [serving in the military](#), and those listed below who have recently lost loved ones.

Marty Fuller and family following the death of **Richard “Dick” Fuller (husband)**, who died **7/16/2021**

Linda Kohler and family following the death of **Orville Green (father)**, who died **7/15/2021**

Todd Morgan and family following the death of **Sandi Morgan (wife)**, who died **7/18/2021**

Marc Robson and family following the death of **Matt Robson (son)**, who died **7/21/2021**

If you would like prayer, please submit a prayer request [online](#), and our pastors and prayer team will pray for you.