

SALT IN MY KITCHEN

BIBLE READING: Colossians 4:2-6

Let your speech at all times be gracious (pleasant and winsome), seasoned [as it were] with salt (v. 6a, Amplified).

Take salt out of our kitchens, and what will be the effect? The finest culinary creation will be tasteless. Eating will be robbed of most of its pleasure.

Salt has other notable qualities besides that of taste:

Salt cleanses. The Prophet Elisha recognized this fact when he used salt to cleanse the waters (II Kings 2:20-22). Surely the analogy is plain. What is more refreshing than cleanliness? The custom of bathing newborn babies with salt was practiced by the Israelites (Ezekiel 16:4) and continues in some parts of the world today. We apply the "salt" of concern and love in bathing a baby, or cleaning a home to make it a haven after a day in the working world's grime.

Salt seasons. The Bible calls Christians the "salt of the earth," and warns against losing our "savour" that seasons the world. We should allow this spiritual "salt" to season our conversation and back up our Christian testimony. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

Salt deices. The layer of ice on the porch steps on a January morning is much like the ice-bound heart, hard as a rock from the impact of bitter experiences. Both melt beneath the application of salt: one, the literal commodity; the other, the "salt" of kindness and peace. "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark 9:50b).

Can you think of any better place to sprinkle this "salt" than your own kitchen? Or any better time than right now?

SHINY-EYED BRIDE

BIBLE READING: I Corinthians 13:1-5

Over the threshold into a world as new as the going-away outfit! New china and linens, shiny new pots and pans, new furniture—and new responsibilities.

Over the threshold into a world as old as Eden: one man, one woman. Two individuals “joined in holy matrimony,” as the minister intoned in the ceremony.

Individualism is not submerged. You are the same you. Personality is not one whit changed.

God, who made us, knows the propensities in all of us for selfishness, for self-seeking that leads to many other happiness-destroying traits.

We would do well then to take to heart right from the ‘carrying over the threshold’—the beginning of a new life—the far-reaching counsel of the love chapter of the Bible (I Corinthians 13).

Love [God’s love in us] does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful (v. 5, Amplified).

Living by God’s pattern you can assure a marriage that will be, as Evangelist John Linton entitled a popular sermon for young adults:

A heaven in which to go to heaven.

BETTER THAN A TRANQUILIZER

BIBLE READING: Philippians 4:4-8

Here is a last piece of advice. . . . fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good. . . . and you will find that the God of peace will be with you (vv. 8-9, Philippians).

Surely there is no better psychological restorative than this verse in all of God's Word. "Think on these things" the King James Bible says. "These" refers to balance-restoring, nerve-calming thoughts.

Undoubtedly the Apostle Paul wrestled often with his thoughts: thoughts of friends who had forsaken him, converts who had disappointed him, his own physical discomfort, the uncertain future, the very real possibility of a violent death. Far from dwelling on "these things," Paul left us a formula for triumphing over such thoughts.

His advice to the Christians in Philippi was, "Think on what will uplift you, not on what will drag you into depression and despair." This was not winking at facts as they were. Neither was his exhortation to "make the best of a bad thing."

Paul knew the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual value of such "thinking"; such "fixing your mind." Real value. Not to be compared for a moment with the world's panacea: tranquilizers.

"Whatsoever things are lovely"
Will crowd out the unlovely.

THE EARLY BIRD

BIBLE READING: Mark 1:35-39

There was a time when the words "early bird" had an earthy, catch-the-worm connotation. Today the reference to an early bird will more than likely pertain to the Early Bird satellite.

Regardless of the generation or season, one "early bird" can be depended on to break the morning stillness: the year-or-so-old baby, herald of the dawn.

This eagerness to start the new day may not be echoed by the average mother, tired by her yesterday. Nevertheless, the one who will surmount the weariness and "rise up a great while before dawn" (or a reasonable equivalent according to the family schedule) will be rewarded for her effort.

In the quiet morning hour comes strength for the day. In the recognition that we are more than flesh and blood, that we are spirit and soul, in the deliberate feeding of our inner self, comes power to overcome the turmoil and conflicts of the day. The minutes spent in reading God's Word, in prayer and communion with our heavenly Father, will be reflected throughout long hours.

Admittedly it takes grim determination to roll out when the alarm sounds reveille. But remember the words of Harriet Beecher Stowe:

Still, still with Thee
When purple morning breaketh.

This is the hour when clear-channel communication between the busy homemaker and her God will prove infinitely more worthwhile than any "early bird" system ever dreamed of.

THE MAKER OF ALL

BIBLE READING: John 1:1-4

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (v. 3).

What does a mother say when she is confronted with blatant atheism in childish form? What happens when second-grade Jimmy announces, "My friend Phil is the smartest boy in our class. He says 'God is made out of chemicals'?"

Jimmy's mother is well aware of the strong admiration her son has for the "class brain." How can she contend with the problem of destroying blasphemous seed without alienating the friend? How can she plant good seed in its place?

Her answer came, as all such answers can come, from the Bible itself.

"Jimmy," advised his mother, "ask Phil this question: 'If God is made out of chemicals, who made the chemicals?' You can go on then and tell him that *God made everything*. Don't argue, son. Just tell him you believe the Bible and this is what the Bible teaches."

One thing we can count on: the devil will assail our children. He will strive to plant seeds of doubt that "He [God] is Himself before all" (Colossians 1:17a, Berkeley).

Being forewarned we can be forearmed. Consistent prayer for and with our family is the best of all bulwarks. We are indebted too, for confidence and assurance, to the hymn writer C. F. Alexander for the words:

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great
and small,
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made
them all.

AGAINST A RAINY DAY

BIBLE READING: Psalm 119:10-16

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (v. 11).

"I just can't seem to memorize anything," is a typical reaction to a Sunday school teacher's suggestion that an adult pupil commit some Bible verses to memory.

Contrast this with the zeal of a Chinese convert from heathenism in this missionary's story:

"My house has only a bamboo roof," explained the convert, "and when the rains come they leak through. I do not want the rain to leak on the Word of God. Rain cannot leak into my heart, so I write God's Word in my heart." The new Christian then demonstrated his ability to quote whole passages of the Bible.

He lived to see "other rains" rob him of the Bible. The godless Communists stormed through his country. They took his Bible but they could not rob him of what he had "hidden in his heart."

Who can tell how long we will enjoy precious freedom to read God's Word? Why not make the most of it. You can't memorize? Maybe you would like to try what other homemakers have found to be successful: Tack up a typed Bible verse where you will see it often in the course of a day. Put it above the kitchen sink or near the ironing board. Think of how you can lighten your daily duties and relieve the monotony by memorizing God's Word.

And you will, like our Chinese convert, have built a spiritual shelter against a rainy day.

SAND, STARS AND PROMISES

BIBLE READING: Genesis 22:13-18

I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven,
and as the sand which is upon the sea shore (v. 17).

Traveling through the desert, perhaps pausing to filter handfuls of sand through his fingers, did Abraham ponder God's stupendous promise? Sand. He could relate this to mighty numbers, as God had promised his nation would become. But stars! What similarity could there be in the number of "sands on the sea shore" and the stars visible on even the clearest night?

Ah, but Abraham had never stood on Mt. Wilson or Mt. Palomar viewing the heavens through giant telescopes. It was never given to him to hear twentieth century scientists speculate:

It would appear there are possibly as many stars
in the sky as there are grains of sand on the sea-
shore.*

No longer do astronomers have any basis on which to scoff at God's promise to Abraham. The Lord makes no extravagant promises. Increasing scientific knowledge only brings this into focus.

Like Abraham we would do well to "stagger not" at God's great promises. Somehow we muster up faith for the less significant needs. God is waiting to honor our faith in big things.

The late Dr. Roland V. Bingham, founder of the Sudan Interior Mission, grasped this fact amid trying circumstances. His theme song and battle cry was:

*Dr. Irwin Moon, in *God of Creation*, Moody Science Film. Used by permission.

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees and looks to
God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities, and cries, "It *shall* be
done!"

STEP RIGHT UP!

BIBLE READING: John 10:7-10

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (v. 9).

You arrive at the door of the up-to-date supermarket. It swings wide open, apparently of its own volition.

Did you ever pause to figure out what makes it work?

Have you sometimes stood on the threshold doubting that the door would open? Or are you the technically-minded type of young woman for whom the door poses no mystery? You're aware that by stepping on a specific area you activate the current that operates it.

More likely you simply accept the fact without question. In doing so, you are exercising faith. Faith in an "electric eye."

Apply the same faith—or logic—to the words of Christ, who says:

I am the door

"Enter in," Jesus invites. There is no need to stand outside wondering if the door will really open. No need to figure out by what process He will open the door for you.

As simply as the youngest child, on a shopping trip with Mommie, stands expectantly waiting for the door to open, you can appropriate the benefits of heaven's open door. Just step right up!

I am the door, the Saviour said;
I am the only door.

SHUT THE DOOR

BIBLE READING: II Kings 4:1-7

Thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons (v. 4).

How often in the course of a day, especially in summer, does the command "Shut the door" ring out. We shut the door against the inroads of insects, pets, heat (in winter, cold). Springs insure that doors will swing shut even when manipulated by careless or too-tiny hands.

The Shunammite woman in our reading today had a two-fold need to shut her door. A creditor had come to take her two sons as slaves. She shut *in* her two boys. She shut *out* the world around them. A crisis called for nothing less than intervention from on high and she had no intention of letting outside interests rob her of the answer to her fervent prayer. In her extreme need she gladly heeded the voice of Elisha, the man of God. The abundance of oil that God supplied met her need of paying debts.

We might well wonder what would have happened had she done everything else God commanded, but had left the door open. Distraction and possibly derision might have moved her to abandon the instructions given by the prophet. We can only speculate, but we do know that unless we deliberately shut out the world's noise there will be little chance to hear the voice of God.

Lord, I have shut the door,
Speak now the word
Which in the din and throng
Could not be heard.

—WILLIAM M. RUNYAN

WHEN GOD IS SLOW

BIBLE READING: Psalm 103:8-13

The LORD is . . . slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy (v. 8).

A young mother answered a hesitant knock on the kitchen door. There stood her five-year-old daughter Janey, mud-splattered, eyes downcast.

Taking in the situation in one glance the mother said, "Honey! Whatever happened to you? C'mon, let me clean you up." And she swept the child into her arms.

The kind, warm tones of her mother's voice started a flood of tears. Between sniffs, Janey gulped out, "Mommie, *you're not mad at me.*" Then, as though the sun had been turned on, the little girl continued, "I prayed and asked Jesus not to let you be mad at me for getting my nice dress all muddy. I asked Him to let me tell you first that I didn't play in the mud. Really, Mommie." The big, tear-filled eyes pleaded for understanding. "It was that nasty car that splashed me *all* over." Janey's words tumbled over each other. "And Mommie, *Jesus answered my prayer.* You're not mad at me."

What might have happened if Janey's mother had been quick to rebuke, harsh in judgment? A child's faith (that her mother had fostered!) might have been shattered. A sensitive child might have lost confidence in her mother's sense of justice. Instead, a new bond was formed. In the childish mind Mommie and Jesus were akin in love and understanding. Sometimes it pays to be slow.

NO INFERIORITY COMPLEX

BIBLE READING: Psalm 111

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments (v. 10).

A personable young woman, who came to know Christ as her Saviour through contact with a group of committed Christians, admitted:

"Never in my whole life, no matter what the situation, had I ever felt inferior. I had money, nice clothes, education, position. I had everything that makes for poise and self-assurance until I met a group of women *who knew the Bible*. Before their knowledge of God's Word I sat humbled, almost envious, conscious of my own inadequacy."

With her confession, the new Christian became an avid student of the Bible. Soon she too was a challenge to others.

Whatever the motive, feasting on God's Word can bring only profit. How true are the words of the psalmist,

I have more understanding than all my teachers
(Psalm 119:99a).

You need never feel inferior in this age when the Bible is so available and when modern versions make its truths clear to the most uninitiated student. The Holy Spirit is ready to be your interpreter, and you can inspire others around you to want to know the Bible's wonders.

Other books may puff us up.
The Book of books will build us up.