

Careful to Answer

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were called before the king and faced charges of refusing to worship the golden image he had erected, Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Things looked pretty dark.

But they replied, "We have no need to answer thee in this matter" (AS). The King James Version reads, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter" (Dan. 3:15-16). The thought seems to be, we will not choose our words carefully -- concerned lest we offend; we will not try to "talk our way out of" this situation. And they added, "Our God is able to deliver us" (if it suits His purposes to do so) "but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Several years back, a preacher said John (the Immerser) "lost his head" because he "lost his head" -- he was not tactful in his criticism of Herod. John had said, of Herod's marriage to his brother Philip's wife, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matt. 14).

John was not "careful to answer," someone might say. Well, he certainly was not trying to "butter up" the king. On the other hand, John and the captive Jews of Daniel 3, were very careful to maintain their faith in God and to court His approval. John lost his head, and the three Hebrews were thrown into the fiery furnace, but each gained more than he lost. We "have no need" for any man's approval as we have need for God's approval.

Jesus said, "Fear not those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell" (Matt. 10:28).

We are not advocating crudeness! Daniel's brethren were respectful to the king; and love for souls will forbid our becoming a bully with the truth. Shouting, stomping pronouncements of damnation are often signs of weakness, while genuine strength is accompanied by humility. But genuine strength speaks truthfully, directly and clearly, regardless of temporal consequences -- and because of inevitable eternal consequences.

- by Robert F. Turner

Earlier Is Not Always Better

Recently I came across some material containing some alarming statistics I wish to pass along to every young parent. Because I have two girls and the older soon to start sixth grade, I find myself very cautious in regards to what is seeking to destroy young girls.

The Executive Director for the Care Net Centers in Amarillo, Texas documented some alarming statistics regarding teenage pregnancy. When a girl begins dating in sixth grade, 91% of the time she will engage in the act of fornication by graduation. However, the percentage of girls committing fornication before graduation is reduced to 20% of the time, if the girl waits until she is in the tenth grade before beginning to date. It was also alarming to hear that the prime time that teenagers are committing fornication during the day is four P.M. (after school, and before parents get home from work).

We must be so careful as parents about giving our children too many liberties too early. Surely we can see the dangers of granting our children various freedoms before they are mature enough to face the responsibilities that come with such liberties. It's not a matter of being trustworthy, but one of being trust-ready.

I'm equally as concerned about mothers who seem to be pushing their girls to grow up too soon. It's obvious in the way these girls dress, the movies they're allowed to watch, the music they're listening to, and the apparent lack of supervision. Too often this is viewed as harmless fun, innocent "school girl" activity, or even cute. Be careful parents -- the numbers tell a different story.

Let's not be deceived by Satan's devices nor ignorant with reference to what our kids are doing and who their friends are. Remember, earlier is not always better.

- by Paul White

"Condescend"

"He is arrogant and proud. He has such a condescending nature." "I just hate it when he acts

in his condescending way.” Have you heard such expressions? Do you know someone who could be described this way? Do you know the meaning of the word “condescend?”

The dictionary gives this definition for the word: “implies a courteous or patronizing waiving of real or assumed superiority.” Here, then, is what we dislike. It is when someone obviously thinks they are better than others, and they show it. Oh, yes, they are willing to “stoop” to our level to deal with us, but they leave a clear impression that they see themselves at a higher level.

Given this definition, it seems obvious we would never want to “condescend” to anyone. To do so would be contrary to many Bible passages that teach us to be humble and genuinely submissive to others. But, there’s a problem! Romans 12:16 (KJV) says: “*Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*” Whoa! This verse says we are supposed to “condescend” to others. How can we explain this?

We have here a word that has changed in meaning overtime. While the current meaning conveys a distasteful pride, the word formerly meant “to yield to,” or “to cooperate with.” Romans 12:16 would then be encouraging us to have a proper attitude toward all men, including those who are poor and lowly.

Newer versions offer help with this verse:

- “associate with the lowly” (NASV)
- “associate with people of low position” (NIV)

With this proper meaning in mind, the question now becomes: are we doing this? Do we show a willingness to freely associate with everyone? Or, do we stand apart and favor only our own clique? The same verse warns us: “*Be not wise in your own conceits.*” Think!

- by Greg Gwin