



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives.

Gentleness

Mary's Perspective:

Words mean a lot. In the [gospel](#) on the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle B), we hear the story of a man who is deaf and has a speech impediment, and he seeks healing from Jesus. In a word – Ephphatha! – the man's ears are opened and he is healed. One word. Be opened.

I have seen commercials on television where they ask folks of various ethnicities what words are hard. Initially, the responses have to do with speaking challenging diphthongs (which, incidentally, I find to be a hard word!). After further reflection, they respond with phrases like, "I was wrong," "I'm sorry," or "I love you." Words mean a lot.

Over the past few weeks, a number of my friends have admitted to struggles. Some are facing health diagnoses, others are dealing with caring for aged parents, and still others are overwhelmed at work. From the outside, these friends have their lives pulled together and those struggles are well concealed. However, a seemingly innocent comment or joking insult can leave wounds that may be hidden, but certainly scar. Words matter.

A dear friend of ours recently died. He was a hardworking husband, father, grandfather, deacon of the church, tradesman, and man of faith. Whenever I spent time with him, I was struck by his gentleness. Strong of spirit and able to fix just about anything, he was a truly gentle being. Don't get me wrong – he was a man of conviction and if you crossed his values, you knew. But he could debate in a way that was respectful and offer support with a gentleness and tenderness that somehow could sooth an aching heart. Many who spoke of him during the time of his wake and funeral recalled his gentleness.

What does this all have to do with anything? I would propose that we don't know the challenges others face without walking in their shoes, but I guarantee you, everyone has stuff. We've written about that before, and we know the stuff is different from person to person, but we all face challenges. The difference between offering support and making it worse can easily come down to your choice of words.

So be gentle with each other. Intentionally. Given the choice, choose words that build up rather than tear down. Gentleness communicates support, consolation, and love. Gentleness makes one walk away from you feeling like it was a good exchange. Gentleness makes one smile whenever they think of you.



Gentleness can take on different forms. That colleague who stops by to share a cup of coffee? That's gentleness. The friend who calls and asks how your doctor's appointment went, or asks if you'd like them to go with you to the appointment? That's gentleness. The neighbor who brings over a pizza and bottle of wine when you've recently made a daunting career move? That's gentleness. Those kind words – instead of the joking insult? That's gentleness. And that matters.

That's it. No deep esoteric thoughts for this blog. Just a reminder to be gentle. Your words make a difference. Let your heart be opened – Ephphatha!

Bob's Perspective:

A great example of gentleness came this afternoon from Mary to me. After much thoughtful consideration and about an hour and a half of actual writing, I proudly sent her my portion of what was to be today's blog for her to review. This is how she responded:

*Here's what I think... this is excellent. But it was also excellent in our 9/1/24 blog!
Most of the points you articulate here, you already said in our last blog.
They're not exactly the same, but there is a lot of overlap. Want to try again?
-m*

She could have just laughed and called me a “dumb-ass” or something, but she didn't. She knew that for various and sundry reasons, I had a fairly tough few days and my mind has been scattered – not unlike what anyone would feel on occasion. After I received her message, I looked at our last blog. With the exception of different formatting, I actually wrote the same blog again. After throwing some things around the office to let out a little steam, I decided to go home and call it a day.

A few minutes after I arrived home, Mary called me to see how I was doing. Just a second before the phone rang, I found that our website had gone down (the problem was the internet connection). Mary sensed the frustration in my voice and gently cut our conversation short so I could continue my tirade in peace!

Her act of gentleness was much appreciated. In a short time, I calmed down and penned this observation about gentleness. That's all I got!

Some final thoughts from Mary:

Sometimes, we need to be gentle with ourselves. We all have times when we feel distracted, or scattered, or disappointed in ourselves. Perhaps we're annoyed because we just can't drop those



pounds we'd like to lose. Maybe we're aggravated because we lost that phone number, or had to re-do a project for whatever reason, or can't remember where we put our stupid glasses again. We all have dumb-ass moments. It's easy to feel frustrated that there aren't enough hours in the day, or that somehow we just don't measure up to whatever lofty expectations we set for ourselves.

If we extended gentleness to ourselves in the way we might treat a friend, we would be more peaceful. Yes, sometimes you need to throw a stapler across the room, or go for a brisk walk, or blast tunes really loudly to facilitate a reset of sorts. But, sometimes, we are our own worst enemy. Rather than setting unrealistic goals and then mentally beating ourselves up for our perceived failures, I would propose that extending a gentler approach, taking small steps and recognizing the positive, and cutting ourselves some slack occasionally will ultimately lead to a more peaceful and productive existence.

Bob often says, "Life comes at you fast." Acknowledge it. Respect that. Take time to accommodate that. Rather than beat yourself up mentally, consider how Jesus would treat you.

Finally, an earworm... ever since we started talking about gentleness for this blog, I have had Michael Card's song [The Gentle Healer](#) stuck in my head. Let it serve as a good reminder for you this day!