

ALL ABOUT FAMILY

Let's Get Rid of "Put Downs" in the Family

by Norman Bales

Sometimes, I feel like it's hard to express myself without running afoul of political correctness. About twenty years ago, some folks in the women's movement asked that we refer to the population as "people." They helped us to understand that "mankind" is gender biased and insensitive to their concerns. For the most part, I was happy to oblige, but it seems to me in more recent times the word police have abandoned all sense of reason. According to columnist John Leo, students at Stanford do not flunk, fail or bomb out on courses. If they cut classes, refuse to write papers and don't show up for the final exam, they receive a grade of NP (no pass). According to Leo, the football team compiled a record of 7 wins, 1 tie and 3 non-wins last season.

While I'm not on a political correctness campaign, I think we could use a little more thoughtfulness in the way we express ourselves in one of the most cherished institutions on the earth - the family. When I listen to the ways we talk about other members of our families in public, I shudder to think what might go on once the doors of our dwelling places are closed.

Put down statements and derogatory name calling are common place communication devices in many contemporary homes. Women loved it when Phyllis Diller named her husband, "Fang." When guys talk to other guys about their wives they think nothing of using labels like "the war department" and "the old battle axe." Humor depends on clever put down remarks in the popular situation comedies on television. I wonder if we think it's supposed to be that way in real life.

Well, I've got news for you. When you're on the receiving end of those cleverly worded barbs, it doesn't feel very good. Worse yet, some think the only way to save face is to return the poison darts. Nobody wins those kinds of games. Everybody loses.

When our children were young, we found ourselves retreating into the habit of saying hurtful things at the dinner table. Sometimes one member of the family felt the need to put another one in his or her place. At other times, the conversation drifted to negative thoughts about others who were outside our family circle. Our daughter read an article about the habit of negative speech and came up with a suggestion for putting a stop to it. She said, "What if someone placed a tape recorder beneath the table and recorded everything we say at the dinner table. Would we want to play it back?" After that, when we started our negative conversations, the first person who had presence of mind enough of do it would simply say, "There's a tape recorder under the table." That put a stop to it.

In the Bible, husbands and wives are instructed to treat one another with consideration and respect (1 Peter 3:7). When other people feel hurt by our witty put downs, we quickly retreat with the excuse, "I didn't mean anything by it." Maybe not. But why did you say it in the first place? Unkind, unthoughtful, unguarded statements produce unnecessary tension and does nothing to promote family harmony.

Marriage over 1700 Years Ago

by Tertullian of Charthage 160 (?) - 230 A. D.

Beautiful the marriage of Christians; two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice.

They are both servants of the same Master. Nothing divides them, either in flesh or in spirit.

They are two in one flesh, and where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit.

They pray together, they worship together; instructing one another, strengthening one another.

Side by side they visit God's church; side by side, they face difficulties and persecution, share their consolations.

They have no secrets from one another, they never bring sorrow to one another's hearts.

Unembarrassed they visit the sick and assist the needy. They give alms without anxiety.

Psalms and hymns they sing. Hearing and seeing this, Christ rejoices. To such as these He gives His peace.

Where there are two together, there also He is present and where He is, there evil is not.