

The Mighty Counselor

By: Jim Hohnberger

The phone rang and the voice on the other end was asking for help. Joe had been married for 17 years and now his wife, Barb, was ready to leave him. Joe was the head elder of his church, was successful in his profession, and many believed he had a good marriage. Can you come and help? He wanted us to spend a weekend in their home working with them on the practicals. We accepted his invitation, wondering what would be the outcome. Upon arriving we knew there was but one solution, but one prescription, and if followed, a new life would come into this torn marriage. You see, the gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life and if followed will bring all the blessings of heaven with it. Would Joe accept the gospel in its simplest form? Would he consent to cooperate with the mighty Counselor? Would he accept a simple solution to a seemingly complex problem?

We shared with Joe and Barb a biblical prescription for their marriage as well as for all marriages whether seemingly good or bad. Ellen White calls it "the inspired injunction." It is found in the book of

James 1:19. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be **swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.**"

What is it that we are to be "swift to hear?" Isaiah 30:21 says that "thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." There is nothing more needed in our marriages than the practical results of communion with God. When in trouble many think they must appeal to some earthly friend or counselor, telling him or her their perplexities and depending upon the friend for help. All the time there stands beside them the mighty Counselor of the ages inviting them to place their confidence in Him. Jesus, the great marriage Counselor, is saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. Shall we turn from Him to uncertain human beings who are as dependent upon God as we ourselves are? "Thine ears shall hear a word behind

thee..." In John 15:5 we are clearly told that "without me ye can do nothing." Even if you had the greatest intellect ever given to man, it would not be sufficient. Just ask Solomon; the wisest man who ever lived states that without a constant dependence upon God "All is vanity." Ecclesiastes 1:14. After discussing the application of James 1:19, we were curious, would Joe begin to co-operate with Christ, yielding his every thought, word and action to the mighty Counselor? Would this marriage be saved?

The next morning three incidents occurred at the breakfast table that thrilled my heart. Joe, who is by nature rather self-serving, after he asked the blessing on the food began to serve himself first. As I watched, his me-first attitude changed. I could sense that the mighty Counselor was impressing him to serve the others at the table first and himself last. His whole spirit changed from "me first," to serving his family and friends. Our prayers and his were being answered. Joe was perhaps for the first time in his life cooperating with the divine Counselor, in a way he had never done before.

About 10 or 15 minutes into the meal, his nine year old daughter rudely interrupted; reacting from his natural impulses Joe was rather harsh, but then it happened again. The Holy Spirit spoke to him, and halfway through his sentence he stopped, regained his dependence upon God and calmly and patiently worked with his daughter. What a joy sprang up in my heart as I saw this man being guided by the mighty Counselor! Meanwhile I was watching his wife, who had a rather puzzled look on her face, for she was not accustomed to seeing her husband restrained in such a way. Toward the end of our meal an opportunity arose for Joe to make a cutting remark toward his wife, and again, in mid-sentence he

responded to the impressions of the Holy Spirit and withdrew his stinging words and spoke a compliment instead of a rebuke.

"Frequently a man who is entirely ignorant of the wants of one of the opposite sex, of the treatment she should receive, takes her under his proposed protection when his influence and his temperament are to her a desolating hail, beating down her will and her aspirations, and leaving her no freedom of mind or judgment. Ignoring her personal rights, he becomes unkind and authoritative. Her individuality is lost in his, and she becomes the slave of his caprice and passions, as though she had naught to do but to obey his whims.

"He may even quote texts of Scripture to show that he is the head, and that he must be obeyed in all things. He feels that his wife belongs to him, and that she is subject to his order and dictation. But who gave him the right to thus dictate and condemn? Is it the law of God, which commands him to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself? No; there is no moral or religious defense for such unjust authority. The same Bible that prescribes the duty of the wife, prescribes the duty of the husband. It says, 'husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.' Colossians 3:19. The husband is to be kind and affectionate. He is to love his wife as a part of himself, and to cherish her as Christ does His Church.

"While women want men of strong and noble characters, whom they can respect and love, these qualities need to be mingled with tenderness and affection, patience and forbearance. The wife should in her turn be cheerful, kind, and devoted, assimilating her taste to that of her husband as far as it is possible to do without losing her individuality. Both parties should cultivate patience and kindness, and

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that tender love for each other that will make married life pleasant and enjoyable." Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, vol. 2, pg 15.

Joe, after 17 years, was now desirous of cultivating that tender love, but would it be too little, too late? No, for whatever the mistakes and failures of the past, we may, with the help of God, rise above them. With the apostle Paul we may say: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14.

As I observed Joe's wife, I could see a little hope spring up in her; would Joe prize her more than himself? Was there still hope? She would wait and watch, but as the weekend passed she observed her husband restrain himself, by the grace of God, at least a dozen times. Yes, she was now a prisoner of hope. They both would renew their commitment to each other and being "swift to hear" allow God to guide and mend their marriage.

Two weeks later Joe called. He wanted to tell us the results of continuing to follow the counsel of the mighty Counselor. He said his wife was now his best friend, that they had communicated more in the last two weeks than in their entire 17 years of marriage. The family was coming together. It would be an uphill fight, but with Christ at their side, guiding their every thought, word and action, and with their responding and co-operating and trusting in the great Jehovah, they would not only restore their marriage but also their life in Christ.

We need to see that merely listening to sermons week after week, the reading of the Bible through and through, or the explanation of it verse by verse, will not benefit us or those who hear us, **unless** we

bring the truths of the Bible into our individual experience. The understanding, the will, the affections, must be yielded to the **control** of the Word of God. **Then** through the work of the Holy Spirit the precepts of the Word will become the principles of the life.

Though many of us profess to be Christians, we carry around with us a **bundle of self** that we regard as altogether too precious to be given up. It is our privilege to lay this bundle of self at the feet of Jesus and in its place develop the character and similitude of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, our spouses are waiting to see the result. If we will respond to the inspired injunction of "**swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath**," we will find that our affections will be set not on ourselves or the things of this world, but on the things above, and that our life will become "hid with Christ in God." Colossians

3:2-3.

My wife has often said, "little attentions often" will keep a home and a life in proper order. Today the very marriages which most need divine instruction often fail of receiving it because they do not place themselves in continual communion and constant dependence upon God. The difficulties to which marriages are daily exposed make continuous prayer a necessity, for there are dangers that beset us on every hand. This communion and constant dependence upon God is maintained by a quiet self-restraint, by not giving the reins of our lives over to our natural impulses. Christ became the Son of man to show us how to live this life of continual communion and complete dependence upon God.

It is when we permit our communion with God, "swift to hear," to be broken that our defense is departed from us. Then instead of being slow to

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We may have the privilege of habitually talking with the Saviour when we are alone, when we are walking, and when we are busy with our daily labor. Our hearts may be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Every breath can be a prayer.

Friends, nothing is more needed in our marriages than the practical results of this continual communion and dependence upon God. When you are tempted to be "swift to speak" or "swift to wrath," close the lips firmly and tell everything to Jesus. Reach up by faith and the mighty Counselor will be there to help. In your weakness lay hold of infinite strength. Our Saviour is waiting for us to do this. He laid aside His royal robe, His kingly crown, and His high command, and stepped down, down, down to the lowest depths of humiliation. Bearing human nature, He met all the temptations of humanity and in our behalf defeated the enemy on every point. All this He did that He might bring us power to be overcomers. "All power," He says, "is given unto me." Matthew 28:18. And this He gives to all who will follow Him that we may demonstrate to the world the power that there is in the religion of Christ for the conquest of self.

The Lord Jesus knows just what His children need. All power, all wisdom, are at our command. We have only to be "swift to hear." Dear friends, will we cooperate with the mighty Counselor that we may demonstrate to the world the power that there is in the true religion of Christ - a well-ordered, well-disciplined, Christ-centered family? We are admonished that this power will recommend the truth as nothing else can. Will you not join with us in rededicating your life, your marriage, and all that you have and are, and from this day forward be like the child Samuel, and say "Speak, Lord; for they servant heareth"? 1 Sam-

uel 3:9. Or as Joshua, when placed in the highest position as commander of Israel, also took the position of a little child to be directed. "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" Joshua 5:14 was his response. The strength and security of the apostle Paul was also in this attitude of mind: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

Friends, Christ is speaking to all of us this very moment saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:20. Will you become assimilated to the divine Pattern? Will you obey the inspired injunction, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath?" If you will, God will guide your every step. He knows what the wife needs to hear and see, and what the husband needs to learn and do. He will mend your marriage and make it better than you ever imagined possible. For He only is the mighty Counselor.

Power for Living



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