

A Realm At Risk

In Stu Weber's chapter, "A Realm At Risk," he points out the destructive effects of a man who is out of line in his role as king. He destroys his family when he becomes either the tyrant or the wimp; and with the destruction of the family comes the breakdown of society. That's a heavy responsibility. The part that impressed me most was how he characterized the role of king as communicator. If he communicates effectively, he builds up his family and his community. And if he doesn't, he tears them down. I'd never thought of that. He says that communication is *developing a common understanding*. There's a lot to chew on in that little phrase.

The Bible says that the tongue is a raging fire, who can control it? Jesus said that out of the mouth comes the content of the heart. A corrupt heart leads to corrupt speech, speech that is not wholesome and nourishing. If we cannot control our speech, then we must change our heart. That's a lifelong pursuit that requires supernatural assistance. I've been in the process of having my heart changed for a very long time. My speech is finally becoming something that builds up instead of tears down. I've been learning to get my eyes off myself and onto others and in doing that I find that my speech changes.

I think that the hardest part when my kids were home was to treat them with the same kind of dignity and respect that I would show to a stranger. There is something different about our children. There is certainly a tendency for men to treat their wife and children as extensions of themselves. I did that for a long time. If they weren't behaving or responding the way I thought would reflect favorably on me, then I would react with the same kind of harshness that I might on myself. They are considerably more fragile than I am, simply because they love me. That love means they are vulnerable and can be very easily hurt when I withdraw my love. I can beat myself up and no one will see it, but I can't do that to other people, especially not to the ones I love.

It took me a long time to realize that even if I'm the only one I'm beating up, I will create the same scars in my own mind as I create in others. It is destructive behavior no matter who becomes the object of my wrath, the guy in the mirror included. I needed to learn to be as kind to myself as I wanted to be to others. Once I did that, I was able to value myself, and then to value others. My heart began to change, and my tongue followed accordingly.

Self-talk leads to other-talk. If I can forgive myself my faults, I can forgive others - and in that order. I need to understand just how valuable I am. Then I can appreciate just how valuable others are. If I can treat myself with respect, then I can treat others with respect. The world doesn't revolve around me. It's not all about me. My value is linked to other people. I don't live in isolation. I cannot live in isolation. I spent a lifetime trying to do that, and another lifetime trying to undo that. Thankfully, the one thing I have never done is quit. Stu writes, "Whatever our frustration - a culture that bites us, wives who won't follow us, kids who won't cooperate with us - we do not have the option of just tossing up our hands and walking away. God-honoring men don't quit."

In pursuing our dreams, and exercising our strengths, we overcome our weaknesses and our fears. But that only happens if we don't quit, if we don't abdicate our role as king, and if we don't try to be tyrants in our passion to make it happen. We are shepherd-kings. We can't kill the flock trying to get them to market, and we can't leave them to fend for themselves. We set direction and purpose, and then we lead.

This day, and every day, I pledge myself to say those things which are positive and help build others up, that recognize other people's value - especially my wife and children. They are precious in God's sight... and in mine. I need to show it, and to say it.