

## George Albert Smith, Lesson 21:

### The Power of Kindness

Monte F. Shelley, 9 Dec. 2012

#### Quotes

- Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.
- Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisers.
- Don't let your worries get the best of you.  
Remember, Moses started out as a basket case.
- If God is your Co-pilot, ... swap seats!
- Be ye fishers of men. You catch 'em — He'll clean 'em.
- Quit griping about your church.  
If it were perfect, you couldn't belong.
- God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.
- Prayer: Don't tell God what to do, just report for duty.
- He who angers you, controls you!
- We're called to be witnesses, not lawyers or judges.
- God Himself doesn't propose to judge a man until he is dead.  
So why should you?

Every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. (Moro 7:13)



#### 1. Workers using offensive language (GAS)

"Once on a hot summer day there was some problem happening under the street near Grandfather's home in Salt Lake City, and some workers from the city had come to fix it. It was hot outdoors, the sun shone fiercely, and the job at hand was a pick-and-shovel kind that made the sweat pour off the men's faces and backs as they dug into the roadway. The workers were not careful with their language, or maybe their mothers hadn't taught them any better, but they were swearing and using terrible language. Their words soon became offensive to many of the neighbors whose windows were open to catch any breeze that might help to cool them.

"Someone went out and asked the men to stop their foul talk, and in the process pointed out that Brother Smith lived right there—couldn't they show some respect and keep quiet, please? With that the men let loose a new string of bad words. Quietly, Grandfather prepared some lemonade and placing some glasses and the pitcher on a tray he carried it out to the struggling men with, 'My friends, you look so hot and tired. Why don't you come and sit under my trees here and have a cool drink?' Their anger gone, the men responded to the kindness with meekness and appreciation. After their pleasant little break they went back to their labor and finished their work carefully and quietly."

- You can find good in everyone if you will but look for it.
- Meet your problems in the spirit of love and kindness toward all.

George Albert Smith "loved everyone because he could see the good within them. He did not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but he loved the sinner because he knew that God was love, and that it is God's love that regenerates human souls and may, by that process, transform the sinner into a saint."

#### 2. Spirit of kindness, not harshness and criticism (GAS)

I feel sad sometimes when I hear the unkind things that are spoken, not only of people in our Church, but of people in the world. Unkind things are not usually said under the inspiration of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord is a spirit of kindness; it is a spirit of patience; it is a spirit of charity and love and forbearance and long suffering; and there are none of us who do not need all these virtues that are the result of the possession of the Spirit of our Heavenly Father.

Lucifer is exercising every means to destroy the souls of the human family. He ... tempt[s] one individual to destroy the reputation of another by saying unkind things of them.

As a people we are advised not to be critical, not to be unkind, not to speak harshly of those with whom we associate. We ought to be the greatest exemplars in all the world in that regard.

Aren't we rather prone to see the limitations and the weaknesses of our neighbors? Yet that is contrary to the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a class of people who find fault and criticize always in a destructive way. There is a difference in criticism. If we can criticize constructively under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, we may change beneficially and properly some of the things that are being done. But if we have the spirit of fault finding, of pointing out the weaknesses and failings of others in a destructive manner, that never comes as a result of the companionship of the Spirit of our Heavenly Father and is always harmful.

#### The Builder by Lou Holtz (retired football coach)

I saw a group of men in my home town.  
I saw a group of men tearing a building down.  
With a heave and a ho and a mighty yell,  
They swung a beam and the sidewalk fell.  
And I said to the foreman, "Are these men skilled,  
The type you'd hire if you wanted to build?"  
And he laughed and said, "Why, no indeed."  
He said, "Common labor's all I need.  
For I can tear down in a day or two  
What it took a builder ten years to do."  
And I thought to myself as I walked away,  
"Which of these roles am I going to play?  
Am I the type that constantly tears down  
As I make my way, foolishly, around?  
Or am I the type that's trying to build with care?  
In hope that my team'll be glad I was there?"

#### 3. Look for and praise virtues (GAS)

Many of us live in such an atmosphere that we are almost dumb when it comes to praising somebody else. We seem unable to say the things that we might say ... to the blessing of others. Let us look for the virtues of our associates and observing them make them happy by commending them.

I plead with you my brethren and my sisters, let us be generous with one another. Let us be as patient with one another as we would like others to be with us. Let us see the virtues of our neighbors and our friends and speak of those virtues, not find fault and criticize. If we will do that we will radiate sunshine, and those who know us best will love us.

#### 4. Kindness invites people to change (GAS)

There are those who will make mistakes. There are those among us today that have gone astray, but they are the children of our Lord and he loves them. He has given to you and to me the right to go to them in kindness and love and with patience and with a desire to bless, seek to win them from the mistakes that they are making. It is not my privilege to judge some of these that have made mistakes and are still making mistakes, unless I am so called by reason of the authority that may be conferred upon me.

Let us not complain at our friends and our neighbors, because they do not do what we want them to do. Rather let us love them into doing the things that our Heavenly Father would have them do. We can do that, and we cannot win their confidence or their love in any other way.

What a joy, what a comfort, what a satisfaction can be added to the lives of our neighbors and friends through kindness. How I would like to write that word in capital letters and emblazon it in the air. Kindness is the power that God has given us to unlock hard hearts and subdue stubborn souls and bring them to an understanding of His purposes.

#### 5. Kindness invites children to listen to counsel (GAS)

It is our privilege as well as our duty to take sufficient time to surround our children with safeguards and to so love them and earn their love that they will be glad to listen to our advice and counsel.

#### 6. Mother on train to see her boy in hospital (GAS)

A few years ago I was on a train. ... I saw ... a woman that I had known. ... She said: "My youngest boy, a few weeks ago, left home ... and the first intimation that we had of his whereabouts was when a telegram came from the Mercy hospital in Portland, stating that our boy was there sick in that hospital. ... There was only one thing to do, and that was to raise means and go at once to that boy." ... [After we arrived,] I went [to the hospital]. ... That sweet mother [was] sitting by ... her boy who had ... pneumonia. ... She was not scolding him because he had been unmindful of her; she was not resentful of his thoughtlessness and of his carelessness, she was just thankful to be with her boy ... [who] was about 16. ... She was trying to encourage him by telling him the things that would make him happy and contented, holding out to him the opportunities that would be his when he was well. In the place of distress and anguish ... there was a perfect halo of light and of peace and happiness spread over the countenance of that boy as he looked up into [her] face.

#### 7. Definition

SOED *kindness* 1. Kinship; natural affection arising from this. 5. Kind feeling, affection, love.

HEB: chesedh 2617 [BDB 338] *goodness, kindness* 1. *Kindness* of men towards men in doing favors and benefits, 2. *Kindness* (especially as extended to the lowly, needy and miserable), *mercy*, II. *Of God kindness, lovingkindness* in condescending to the needs of his creatures in *redemption, preserving life*, ...

**A Scout is Kind.** A Scout knows there is strength in being gentle. He treats others as he wants to be treated. Without good reason, he does not harm or kill any living thing.

#### 8. Kindness and Strangers

<sup>35</sup> I was a stranger, and ye took me in: <sup>36</sup> Naked, and ye clothed me: ... Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. (Mt 25:34–40)

"On a cold winter morning, the street cleaning crew [in Salt Lake City] was removing large chunks of ice from the street gutters. ... One [temp worker] wore only a lightweight sweater and was suffering from the cold. ... [President Smith] asked the worker, '... Where is your coat?' The man replied that he had no coat to wear. [He] then removed his own overcoat, handed it to the man and said, 'This coat is yours. It is heavy wool and will keep you warm. I just work across the street.'" (GAS13)

#### 9. Exceptions

##### When and why are *kind* people unkind?

Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited ... until you try to sit in their pews at church.

<sup>39</sup> We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. (D&C 121:39)

## 10. Kindness and Children

*To improve human relations,  
treat people like humans, not relations.*

### Jewish Counselor and the War in Heaven

One day a woman called ... for some counseling. Their problem was a rebellious teenager and an escalating power struggle between her and her parents that was getting out of hand. ... [This] is a common ... issue for family therapists. ... I suggested that they [go my Jewish colleague who was closer]. After only a couple of weeks, I got a call from my friend. "Carl, I need some help. ... If they don't [loosen up the parental iron fist], this kid is about to run away from home or attempt suicide or do something else drastic. But ... every time I suggest ... loosening up, they patiently explain to me that I just don't understand their religious obligation, as Mormon parents, to keep this kid in line. Frankly, I don't know how to deal with this." ...

"Here's what you do. First, tell them ... you have developed a real curiosity about the Mormon religion. ... Then ... [ask about the] 'war in heaven' ..."

A few days later he called. "Carl, ... You wouldn't believe the response. Even the rebellious teenage kid promised to give me a copy of some book ... with the family picture in the front. Then I said ... What was this war in heaven? Well, the mom ... launched into some story about a council in heaven and two plans and she gets about three minutes into it and she stops cold in her tracks and gives me a funny look and says, 'All right, Doctor, you've made your point: From that moment on they were like putty in my hands. It was like magic. Carl, what is this war in heaven?'"

Of course, there was no magic. This good LDS woman simply had the unnerving experience of explaining Satan's plan to an "investigator" and, in the midst of her explanation, recognizing it as substantially her own version of responsible Mormon parenting as she had outlined it to him the week before. She understood the gospel principle fully; she just had been blinded to its applicability to her everyday challenges as a parent. (Carlfred Broderick, *My Parents Married on a Dare*, 87–89)

Like these well-intentioned parents, I used compulsory means to be sure my first teenage son would "choose the right." There would be no empty seats at our eternal family table! After several years of frustration, bad feelings, and rebellion, I read a story like this one. As I read, the Spirit helped me realize how I was implementing Satan's plan in my family. My efforts to compel him to come unto Christ were actually driving him away from us, the Church, and Christ. After much soul searching and help from the spirit, I learned how to respect my son's agency to choose for himself. I also learned to use the Lord's methods of persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, love unfeigned, and kindness (D&C 121:41–42). Since that time, I frequently say to myself, "I voted for agency" when I see people doing things I think are wrong. This calms my natural response so I can feel the promptings spirit.

**Richard G. Scott:** The inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit can be overcome or masked by strong emotions, such as anger, hate, passion, fear, or pride. When such influences are present, it is like trying to savor the delicate flavor of a grape while eating a jalapeño pepper. Both flavors are present, but one completely overpowers the other. In like manner, strong emotions overcome the delicate promptings of the Holy Spirit. ("To Acquire Spiritual Guidance," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 8)

"Satan does not need to overpower us in order to win the war.

He only needs to get us to adopt his way of fighting it." (Warner)

It took time and practice to change my natural man habits of thinking and doing. When someone did not do what I thought was right, I said to myself: “I voted for agency.” I imagined Christlike responses to hearing about possible mistakes, crimes, or sins committed by one of my teenagers. When I slip up, I imagine what I wish I would have done and ask “what can I do now” to improve things.

**Let go:** For 4 years, some parents were doing everything possible to fix their two teenage sons who were doing drugs. They had tried various restrictions and punishments. They sent one to a 15 month rehab program. The father was concerned for his sons and frustrated that nothing was working. One day at the temple he saw a picture of Christ in a storm tossed boat.

“Each of the disciples is in various forms of panic. One disciple is clenching tightly to a rope that is tied to the sail. He has his teeth gritted and is pulling with all his might. At the same time, the Savior is standing in the front of the boat very calmly with His hand outstretched. As I stood in the temple that morning, the eyes of my understanding were opened and I suddenly saw myself in this painting. I was grasping on to the rope (my sons) as tightly as I could. I somehow felt that if I was strong enough, or good enough, or held on tight enough, I could save my two sons, just as this disciple thought he could save the boat. The Savior on the other hand didn’t need to use any physical strength at all; without holding tightly to anything, spoke the words ‘peace be still’ and the elements obeyed. As I stood in the temple ... the Spirit whispered to me ‘... let go of the rope and trust me.’ I soon realized that my sons have a Savior... and it isn’t me! I bought a copy of this painting and display it prominently in my home to remind me to let go and to trust the Savior.”



# 11. There are no mistakes, only learning opportunities.

*Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment.*

Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed on an equal or greater benefit. (Napoleon Hill)

<sup>24</sup> Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant. (D&C 90:24)

<sup>27</sup> If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; ... for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:27)

My weakness = I cannot fix or change my children or spouse, especially while using Satan’s methods.

I always choose the right ... after exhausting every alternative.

When I realize I have made a mistake, I can blame and punish myself, or I can learn from my experience, trust in God, and become more Christlike.

Every football play starts where the ball is ... not where it could or should have been!

# 12. Two Ways of Viewing and Doing (MFS, BofM lesson 5)

See What Is	
1. Find fault	1. Accept (not condone or desire)
2. Blame	2. Goal focus (end)
3. Punish (if possible)	3. Method (means)
4. Justify (grievance story)	4. Do it! (learn, repeat, grateful)

# How were these ways of viewing and doing illustrated?

- Get the plates of brass:
- Broken bow:
- After Ishmael died, Laman wanted to kill Nephi for trying to rule over his older brothers. (1 Ne 16:37–38)
- Commandment to build a ship
- Laman tied up Nephi on ship
- Summaries of journey to Bountiful (1 Ne 17)
 

Both Nephi and Laman were on the same path to the land of promise. Nephi was happy and grateful; Laman was unhappy and ungrateful. Why?

If I am following the “manner” or “plan of happiness” that leads to joy, why am I so unhappy?

Two choices when I don’t like something:  
I can change my viewing or doing!

Laman Blame Game, or the Nephi Change Game.

# 13. A way that seems right but leads to death

There is a way that *seemeth right* unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of *death*. (Prov 16:25; 14:12)

What seems right will kill you! Throwing water on a chemical fire may seem right but the explosion it causes can kill you. Trying hard to get out of quicksand seems right, but your efforts cause you to sink faster. When lost in the wilderness, it may seem right to save your water ... until you die of dehydration.

The *Blame Game* seems like the right way to change other people. Therefore, we continue using these methods even though they make things worse and lead to the death of the relationship.

A young man asked his girlfriend to call every night when she got off work late. When she forgot to call him one night, the *Blame Game* began. The next morning he “chewed her out” for not calling. Within a few weeks they were no longer dating. What seemed right led to the death of the relationship.

“A man dragged his wife into a stake president’s office, thrust her in a chair, and said, ‘President, tell my wife to obey my priesthood. Then all our problems at home will be solved.’ The president opened ... [to D&C 121:36–37], looked into the man’s eyes, and said quietly, ‘According to what I read here, you have no priesthood.’” (Covey) What seemed right to this man was leading to the death of the marriage.

# Ways That Seem Right But Usually Don’t Work

- Do my will! (You should...)
- Do my will or else! (You must...)
- Do my will because I am smarter, wiser, better, or more righteous than you!
- Do my will cheerfully, willingly, and without being asked!
- Your will be done, not mine. (Lose-Win)

# Until I learn a better way, I will do what seems right.

Repeated failures and heartaches may soften my heart and open my mind so I am ready to let the Spirit help me learn a better way.

# 14. Kindness and Spouses

Love is blind ... but marriage is a real eye opener!

“The only thing more universal than a woman’s desire to change her man is a man’s resistance to it.” (Marriage)

The only thing more universal than a father’s desire to change his child is the child’s resistance to it.





<sup>23</sup> If ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee—<sup>24</sup> Go ... and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you. (3 Ne 12:23–24)

## 15. How love begins and ends (Marriage)

How Love Begins	
Focus: What I <b>like</b>	Attraction
View: “Rose-colored”	Appreciation
Do: Please and honor other	Affection (time, touch, talk)
	Ask

Habitation	
Focus: What is different	Less Attraction
View: Take each other for granted	Less Appreciation
Do: Normal	Less Affection

Expectations (Rules)	
Focus: What I <b>dislike</b> (find fault)	Disappointment
View: <i>Blame</i> and <i>Pride Games</i>	Depreciation
Do: Displease and dishonor other	Disaffection, Demand

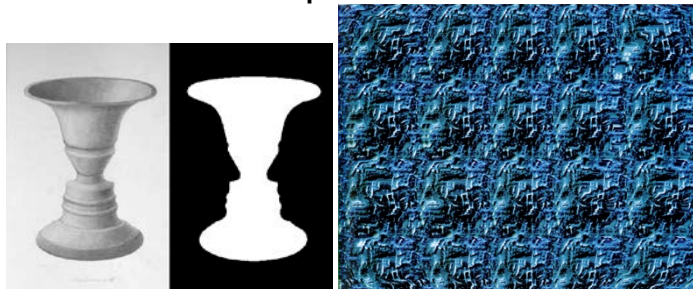
Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.  
Every day 10,000,000 relationships are destroyed with the same weapon.

How Love Ends	
Worthless	Last Straw
Hopeless (Impossible to change.)	Rewrite history
Helpless (I can’t change it.)	“Divorce”

## 16. Top Ten Dishonoring Acts in a Home (Marriage)

- Ignoring or degrading another person’s opinions, advice, or beliefs (especially criticizing another person’s faith).
- Burying oneself in the television or newspaper when another person is trying to communicate with us.
- Creating jokes about another person’s weak areas or shortcomings. (Sarcasm or cutting jokes act like powerful emotional word pictures and do lasting harm in a relationship.)
- Making regular verbal attacks on loved ones: criticizing harshly, being judgmental, delivering uncaring lectures.
- Treating in-laws or other relatives as unimportant in one’s planning and communication.
- Ignoring or simply not expressing appreciation for kind deeds done for us.
- Distasteful habits that are practiced in front of the family—even after we are asked to stop.
- Over committing ourselves to other projects or people so that everything outside the home seems more important than those inside the home.
- Power struggles that leave one person feeling that he or she is a child or is being harshly dominated.
- Unwillingness to admit that we are wrong or ask forgiveness.

## 17. What can one see in pictures like these?



Although a 3D picture doesn’t change, where you *focus* your eyes determines what you *see*. Some ... see a strange pattern ... others see a 3D image. What you *see* determines how you *feel* and how you respond. Some people *love* these pictures because they can see a 3D image. Others *hate* them because they have tried many times but have not been able to see a 3D image. (RCC 1)

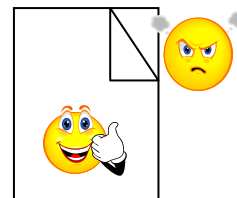
## 18. I can change my Viewing or my Doing. (Marriage)

If I do as I have always done, I will get what I have always got.

In unpleasant situations, it is easy to respond to like Laman (a natural man). It takes much practice, to respond like Nephi and to catch myself if I do not.

I make our bed with one corner turned down as a reminder that we can look at what was done (bed made) and be grateful or at what was not done (corner) and be unhappy.

- If I look for what I like or do not like, I will find it.
- I can murmur about problems like Laman or seek solutions like Nephi.
- I can be grateful like Nephi or ungrateful like Laman.
- When I catch myself responding like Laman, I can practice changing my viewing and doing to be like Nephi.
- Looking back on an unpleasant time, I can review and relive a grateful survival story like Nephi, or I can review and relive an ungrateful grievance story like Laman.



**Flat tire:** If I have a flat tire, I can fix it (repent) and be on my way, OR I can sit at the side of the road having a pity party or blaming myself instead of fixing it. Once it is fixed, it is useful to learn from the experience to avoid similar future experiences. But it is of NO value to waste time in self-pity or self-blame.

## Quotes

**George Albert Smith:** I pray that the love of the gospel of our Lord will burn in our souls and enrich our lives, that it will cause husbands to be kinder to wives, and wives to be kinder to husbands, parents to children, and children to parents because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is a gospel of love and kindness.

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** Let us return to our homes with resolution in our hearts to do a little better than we have done in the past. We can all be a little kinder, a little more generous, a little more thoughtful of one another. We can be a little more tolerant and friendly to those not of our faith, going out of our way to show our respect for them. We cannot afford to be arrogant or self-righteous. It is our obligation to reach out in helpfulness not only to our own but to all others as well. ... Let husbands and wives cultivate a spirit of absolute loyalty one to another. Let us not take one another for granted, but let us constantly work to nurture a spirit of love and respect for each other. We must guard against faultfinding, anger, and disrespect one for another. (“Thanks to the Lord for His Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 1999)

## Sources:

- GAS = George Albert Smith, see chapter in lesson manual
- MFS = Monte F. Shelley, Gospel Doctrine lessons, [www.sviewp.com](http://www.sviewp.com)
- Marriage = Monte F. Shelley, “Marriage Lessons I Learned and Am Learning,” <http://www.sviewp.com/Supp-Talks.htm>
- Covey = Stephen R. Covey and Truman G. Madsen, *Marriage & Family: Gospel Insights*, 54.
- Warner = C. Terry Warner, *Honest, Simple, Solid, True*, BYU Devotional 1-16-96