



## SAYING IT WITH TACT

### Words Softly Spoken

December 3, 2022

#### 1 PREPARING

##### A. THE SOURCE

**Proverbs 16:24 (NLT)** • “Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.”

**1 Corinthians 9:22 (NLT)** • “I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some.”

(More: 2 Samuel 12:1-14; Esther 4:9-17; 5:1-8; 7; 1 Kings 12:1-16; John 4:1-26, 39-42.)

“If a man has tact, industry, and enthusiasm, he will make a success in temporal business, and the same qualities, consecrated to the work of God, will prove even doubly efficient; for divine power will be combined with human effort” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 276).

“How much is lost through a want of tact and skill in presenting the truth to others” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 380).

(See additional passages in student material.)

##### B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “SAYING IT WITH TACT”

Communication is a part of who we are and so the manner in which we communicate is significant—it is the means by which we connect with others and share ourselves with them. There is something in all of us that at times feels awkward in our relationships, but careful communication can smooth over much of that discomfort. Our tact—or tactlessness—determines whether our interactions with others build them up or tear them down.

Not surprisingly, the Bible has much to say on the power of speech. There are stories of wise people who spoke up with tact and of foolish people who were tactless. But perhaps the most challenging occasion for speaking with tact is in telling others about our faith. There are good examples of this in the Bible as well.

We can practice being tactful, thinking about what we say and how it might affect others. And when we can relate to others more easily and be better friends to others, we can have a greater influence for God with our friends and with the people we come into contact with each day.

## C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "SAYING IT WITH TACT"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Appreciate the importance of good communication, particularly well-chosen words.
2. Recognize stories in the Bible in which people acted tactfully and tactlessly.
3. Consider how to react with tact in practical life situations.

## D. MATERIALS NEEDED

**Beginning** • (Activity A) small pieces of paper—enough for one for each student, pens or pencils, bowl or other appropriate container; (Activity B) dictionary, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

**Connecting** • Bibles, working paper, pens or pencils, student lessons, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk, table (optional).

## 2 BRIDGING

### A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

**Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:**

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

### B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at [www.realtimefaith.net](http://www.realtimefaith.net))
- >> Service project reports

## 3 BEGINNING

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word. At some point you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

### A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • The Bible says, "Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body" (**Proverbs 16:24, NLT**). It is so easy to say something nice about someone that would make their day, but how often do we do it? This activity is designed to have students recognize these opportunities and how easy it is to encourage someone else, as well as enjoying a little encouragement themselves.

**Get set** • As students enter the class area, ask each of them to write their name on one side of a small piece of paper, placing their name into the bowl provided. Ask students if they would like the chance to make someone happy, if they could. When you have some positive reaction, ask students to take this activity seriously and take the chance to do just that.

**Go** • Instruct students to choose a piece of paper from the bowl at random—if they get their own name, they should return it to the bowl and select another. Instruct students to write on the blank side of the paper something nice about the person whose name is written on the other side. The nice thing may be a commendation about something they can do well, a character trait, or a God-given talent. In a smaller group you may choose to have more than one person add a positive comment or encouragement to each sheet of paper. When this is completed, collect all papers and return them to the person named on the paper. In this way, each student should receive a positive message.

**Debriefing • Ask:** How important are words in friendships? (Well-chosen words can be incredibly encouraging.) **How did you feel about having something nice said about you?** (It feels good.) **How easy or hard was it to give a compliment?** (It might depend on how well you know someone, but it should not be too hard.) **Do you think we talk encouragingly often enough?** (We could do it more.)

## B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready •** This activity will introduce students to the use of tact in everyday life and test their understanding of the word itself.

**Get set •** Check a dictionary or two for an understandable definition of “tact.” Have a white/chalkboard available to make a list of jobs.

**Go •** Ask students to explain what they understand “tact” to mean. Allow for a number of responses, then read aloud the dictionary definition and compare. **Ask: Does the word suggest a positive or negative image?** After responses, ask the students to list jobs they see as regularly requiring tact. When a suggestion is made, ask the students to imagine a situation in which someone in that occupation might need to be tactful. The first suggestions will probably refer to sales-type jobs. Encourage students to think beyond this to any job that involves relationships with others, whether as workmates or as clients, customers, or patients.

**Debriefing • Ask:** Do you think you would be able to do a “tact-intensive” job? (personal responses) **Does tact apply only to work or employment situations?** (No, it is relevant to all our relationships—any time we are dealing with people.) **So how would you give a simple definition of “tact”?** (Allow a variety of responses.)

## C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

**In your own words, tell the following story:**

Recently a newspaper reported the dress of a young man appearing in a local court. Most

notably, he wore a Michael Schumacher jacket (Michael Schumacher: a high-ranking Formula 1 race driver) complete with Ferrari logo. It may not have been the most appropriate clothing choice for his court date. He was there as a repeat speed offender and his driver’s license was canceled for four years. His road-racing days have been brought to a halt, at least temporarily. One wonders if the penalty may not have been as severe if he had chosen a different jacket that day.

**Debriefing • Ask:** Can you think of occasions on which how we dress may make a difference to how we are treated? (Allow a variety of responses—and point out that how we dress is a way of communicating who we are and what’s important to us, just as in the story.) **In what other aspects of our lives may tact play a part?** (Possible responses include speaking, relationships, family, church, telling others about God.)

## 4 CONNECTING

### A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

**Present the following ideas in your own words:**

Divide the class into four groups and assign one of the following Bible characters to each group: Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-14); Esther (Esther 4:9-17; 5:1-8; 7); Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-16); Jesus (John 4:1-26, 39-42). Have each group read the relevant Bible verses and come up with answers to the following questions:

- In two sentences, what is your group’s story about?
- Does the main character of the story use tact?
- In each story, what might have been the outcome if there was more or less tact employed?
- What is one thing we can learn about tact from this story?
- How did this person’s actions fit in with God’s plan for His people?

After a few minutes of working in groups, have a representative from each group share the group’s

conclusions with the wider class. Discuss the similarities and difference among these stories with the class.

## B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

**Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson, following the cues below.**

Divide the class into two groups. If one is available you might like to place a table in between the two groups, thus representing the characters in the lesson illustration. Assign to one group the role of the elderly man and to the second the role of the neighbor. Refer students to the story in the student lesson and begin to read through the story. At appropriate points through the story, pause and ask each group in turn to answer the following questions: **How is your character feeling at this time? Would you say something to the other person? If yes, what would you say and how would you say it? How was tact used in this story by the elderly man?**

There may be some discussion within the two groups. Allow space for this, recognizing the variety of possible reactions. At the conclusion of the story, ask each group how their character might have made the situation worse and how they might have made the situation better.

## C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

**Present the following ideas in your own words:**

Perhaps the most delicate relationships for Christians are those with people who know about being a Christian but have not chosen to follow God. In relating to anyone who has a less-than-positive attitude toward Christianity, to know how we might raise this important subject is difficult. As Christians, we are told to share the story of God's love with everyone and we believe it is the most important thing in life; but how do we do it without turning people off and perhaps even losing that friendship?

**Ask: Is tact important in telling others about God, or because it is right should we simply**

**tell it to them straight?** (Tact is important to build a relationship in which we can share God's love.) **How might we suggest Christianity to someone without "preaching" at them?** Make a list of ideas on a blackboard or flipchart. (Suggestions might include praying for them, being ready to answer questions if they are asked, asking gentle and interested questions about their beliefs, including the person in groups with your church friends, living an authentic life that demonstrates the value of what you believe.)

Have a volunteer read **1 Corinthians 9:22** and to the story of Paul in Athens. **Ask: What was Paul's attitude to tact in preaching the good news about Jesus?** (He did whatever was necessary to get people to listen. A part of this was showing respect to other people's beliefs and experience. Tactfully, he was then able to share his beliefs and experience.)

## 5 APPLYING

### A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Designate one side of the room or class area as the "Say nothing" side and the other as the "Say it straight" side. The middle between the two is the "Say it with some tact" spot and the space between these three positions represent varying degrees on a sliding scale between "Say nothing" and "Say it straight." Have all the students stand up (clear a space if necessary) and for each of the scenarios ask students to move to the place on the scale they feel is appropriate. Read each scenario in turn. Allow time for students to move to their chosen position and time for comments from students about their choices.

#### The scenarios:

1. You are babysitting a 4-year-old. You turned away for just a moment and now look up to see the child heading toward a busy street.
2. Your teacher has marked an answer on your test paper wrong but you believe it should have been marked right.
3. You have a part-time job in a local store. You have told the manager you are not able

to work on Saturday but the new roster has you down to work this coming weekend.

4. You are at a friend's house and they are about to watch a movie you know you should not watch.
5. A friend has stopped coming to church and does not seem interested in anything to do with God.
6. You have been given not enough change at the supermarket by a busy checkout girl.
7. Your uncle is telling you loudly why religion is a joke that only stupid people could ever believe.
8. You are travelling on a plane, train, or bus and the person sitting next to you asks where you are going. You are going to a church camp.

**Debriefing • Ask:** Are there right and wrong answers in an activity such as this? (Probably in some circumstances.) **Why do we have variations between different people's responses in this activity?** (Factors may include personality, imagining the situation differently, different beliefs guiding our reactions.) **What factors might influence our responses in those situations?** (How well we know the other person, how public the place is in which the situation occurs, what is at stake for us—and others.)

## B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Is tact important in relationships with friends and family? Why or why not?
2. How can we know when we should speak up against something we think is wrong or remain silent to avoid causing trouble?
3. Is there a line beyond which speaking with tact might be considered lying? Explain.
4. Because Christians often have strong views on right and wrong, does that mean Christians should be more or less tactful? Why?
5. Is it wrong to tell someone they are wrong? Why or why not? Are circumstances relevant?
6. How can we practice tact?

## 6 CLOSING

### SUMMARY

**In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:**

How we communicate dictates how we relate to the world around us, to other people, and often how we relate to God. Learning to communicate more effectively is important to our personal and spiritual development. Knowing when to speak and when to remain silent, encouraging others to think differently, and being able to tell others about the love of God can be difficult challenges at times. Practicing honest tact as demonstrated in the lives and ministry of many Bible characters should be a part of our Christian growth. At its best, tact is allowing the love of God to flow through our conversations and our lives.



## STUDENT LESSON

### SAYING IT WITH TACT

Words Softly Spoken

December 3, 2022

#### Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit” (Proverbs 17:27, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ:** “The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 134-137

#### WORDS SOFTLY SPOKEN

An elderly couple purchased a home and moved into it. As they were arranging their furniture they had their first visitor. He was the man living next door, and he had fire in his eyes. He had come to talk to them about a tree in the front yard

of the newly acquired home. He wanted that tree out of there. The recent arrivals regarded the angry neighbor in silence for a few moments. Then the husband said,

“Sir, this tree is on our property, but I can see it irritates you. My wife and I would like to keep it, but you are our neighbor and your friendship is worth more than the tree. After we have gotten settled and have rested a little, you and I will take axes and shovels and remove it.”

Those conciliatory words softly spoken took all the wind out the sails of the irate neighbor. He gulped and said, “I don’t want to be nasty about it. The tree may not be so bad, really. Anyway, let’s wait and see.”

This once-angry man turned out to be a splendid neighbor, and the tree was never mentioned again.

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1, NKJV).

—Adapted from Henry Feyerabend, “Words Softly Spoken,” *Slices of Life* (Oshawa, Ont.: It is Written, 1995), pp. 27, 28.

#### Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 7:1-5.
- » A group of your school friends have been bullying a new student. They have ridiculed his/her old clothes, bad haircut, and physical appearance. You see the hurt this is causing the new student. Wanting to fit in, you do not say anything. But sitting with your friends at lunch, you still feel bad about what has been happening.

- » Should you speak up? Why or why not? How can you communicate to your friend in a tactful way that everyone needs to be treated with respect regardless of the differences between us?

## Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- » Read Psalm 1:1, 2; Matthew 20:25-28; Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 4:8.
- » “There is a wonderful power in silence. When impatient words are spoken to you, do not retaliate. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry usually act as a whip, lashing the temper into greater fury. But anger met by silence quickly dies away. Let the Christian bridle his tongue, firmly resolving not to speak harsh, impatient words. With the tongue bridled, he may be victorious in every trial of patience through which he is called to pass” (Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, pp. 135, 136).



See activity at the end of this lesson.

## Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read James 1:19.
- » All relationships are built upon communication. So when, how, and what we communicate has a significant impact upon the nature of our relationships. A number of Bible passages highlight the power that speaking has to change our lives and affect the lives of others.
- » So before we even begin to speak, we need to ask ourselves such questions as: Should I say anything? How will the person react? Should I speak up even if what I say won't be popular? Sometimes we may not recognize it, but we

make choices every day about how we will communicate with others.

- » The word “tact” can at times be used to mean simply telling people what they want to hear so they do what we want. But intelligent and honest tactfulness is an important part of good communication. Tact is a part of efficient relationships and can make us a better friend.

## Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS



See activity at the end of this lesson.

## Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Esther 4:14.
- » One of the best stories of relating to others as a Christian and knowing how to speak tactfully is the story of Queen Esther (see Esther 4; 5; 7). First of all, the secret of her success was found in a genuine relationship with God. She prayed and fasted for three days before she went to see the king. What other steps did she take that demonstrate her wisdom and tact? How can you use some of the lessons from the Bible to speak and act with tact in your interactions with others?

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- » Review the memory text.
- » In any aspect of our lives—but perhaps more in sharing Jesus with our friends—we need to practice tact. Ellen White wrote, “In the work of soul-winning, great tact and wisdom are needed. The Savior never suppressed the truth, but He uttered it always in love. . . . He exercised the greatest tact, and He was always kind and thoughtful” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 117).

Friday  
**APPLYING**

- » One of the most difficult aspects of tactfulness is when to say something and when to keep quiet—and then if you do say something, what do you say? Jesus taught that we should “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12, NIV). Think of a scenario in which something unexpected happens that causes you to feel embarrassed. Ask yourself the following questions and write down your answers on the lines provided:

Would you like a friend to say something to you?      Y      N

If yes, how would you suggest they tell you?

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Is this how you would treat a friend in similar circumstances? Explain.

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Monday activity

Find the hidden words within the grid of letters. You will then discover the hidden message in the first two lines of the puzzle. The words can be forward, backward, up, down, and diagonal.

D E X T E R I T Y S S A Y S I R  
 N N G I T W I T K S H T A U C T  
 O T N H S D Q I S E R Q Q B Y C  
 I S A M Y S L O O N X B I T D A  
 T D S C C L E K L L N X I L I U  
 P Z I Z A Z N N W U N V H E P T  
 E V B N C R T N E F I G R T L I  
 C O N S I D E R A T I O N Y O O  
 R L F E L H V P I H I O Q J M N  
 E L Y T E H Y S R G H L Z G A E  
 P A V C D I N X D U J A O O C L  
 J U D G M E N T E O L K O P Y T  
 T H G I S N I T C H K B Z M M N  
 J M W D I S C R E T I O N X R E  
 T N E M N R E C S I D H O W B G

care  
 diplomacy  
 judgment  
 dexterity  
 gentle  
 sensitivity  
 discretion  
 insight  
 thoughtfulness  
 perception  
 politeness  
 consideration  
 skill  
 subtlety  
 discernment  
 caution  
 delicacy

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## Wednesday activity

**Read the texts and fill in the blanks** Texts are from the New International Version of the Bible.

1. "For if you \_\_\_\_\_ silent at this time, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for the Jews will arise from another \_\_\_\_\_, but you and your father's \_\_\_\_\_ will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your \_\_\_\_\_ position for such a \_\_\_\_\_ as this?" (Esther 4:14).
2. "Whoever of you loves life and \_\_\_\_\_ to see many good days, keep your \_\_\_\_\_ from evil and your lips from telling \_\_\_\_\_" (Psalm 34:12, 13).
3. "Sin is not ended by \_\_\_\_\_ words, but the \_\_\_\_\_ hold their \_\_\_\_\_" (Proverbs 10:19).
4. "Even fools are thought \_\_\_\_\_ if they keep \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ if they \_\_\_\_\_ their tongues" (Proverbs 17:28).
5. "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and slow to become \_\_\_\_\_, because human anger does \_\_\_\_\_ produce the righteousness that God \_\_\_\_\_" (James 1:19, 20).
6. "We all \_\_\_\_\_ in many ways. Anyone who is \_\_\_\_\_ at fault in what they \_\_\_\_\_ is perfect, able to keep their \_\_\_\_\_ body in check" (James 3:2).

How many times was the word "silent" used in these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

How should we listen?

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When should we refrain from talking?

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Which one of the above verses speaks to you in a special way?

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How is Bible teaching us about being tactful? Explain.

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