

Persuasive deeds are more effective than persuasive words

“Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only...” James 1:22

“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:9

The best way to change someone is with actions, not words. We’ve all heard about how hard it is to live with nagging wives, verbally abusive husbands, dictatorial bosses, complaining employees, and excessively judgmental individuals. Words are not as powerful as we would like them to be. Most often, our attempts at “constructive criticism” backfire and make matters even worse. It seems that, despite our best efforts, our powers of verbal “persuasion” tend to fall on deaf ears. We find ourselves saying things like, “some people just can’t or won’t change,” or “I’ll never be able to change him/her,” or “I’ll just have learn to live with his/her imperfections and faults.” And so on.

When attempting any important task, more can be accomplished from a position of strength than weakness. If you view yourself as a “helpless” victim, the results will match your expectations. On the other hand when you approach a task with strength and confidence, you will most likely succeed. According to 1 Peter 3:9, the secret to overcoming evil is to attack it with blessing. In other words, return good for evil. According to James 1:22, actions are more important than words. Talk is cheap.

When two individuals experience conflict, in most cases at least a portion of the guilt lies with each party. Each generally regards the other as the most guilty. You might regard yourself as only 10% or 20% at fault. Not surprisingly, the other party probably views him or herself as only 10% or 20% at fault. This impasse cannot be bridged with words alone. In order mend and restore the relationship, you need to focus on the 10% to 20% of the fault that lies with you and overcompensate for your own deficiencies.

The advice I giving here is not for victims of severe spousal abuse or other forms of criminal behavior. If you are being victimized in this way, you need to get out of the relationship altogether, and the sooner you do it the better. Instead, my advice is for those of you who are experiencing conflict in an otherwise valuable personal or professional relationship.

If you are unhappy in a relationship that you want to maintain and make better, then here is a suggestion that might work for you. Try to improve the relationship with persuasive deeds, rather than with persuasive words. If you must use words, the most helpful are words of apology for the portion of the guilt that lies with you, with absolutely no mention of the guilt that lies with the other. Your goal is to use actions alone to restore or improve the relationship, and make it better than it ever was. If the conflict is with your spouse, your goal is to rekindle the intensity of love that you first had for one another. If the conflict is in a professional relationship, then you want to earn maximum respect from your boss, employee, or coworker and make yourself as valuable an asset as possible to the company that you manage or work for.

