

It Is Written

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MAKE YOUR BED

By Lance Byers

"But WHY? I'm the only one who sees it, and I don't care!" This is what my daughter complained to me. I was doing the laundry, and found a missing sock of hers, so as I went to hunt for the mate, I opened her sock drawer. What greeted me was complete disarray. The socks and other things in the drawer were shoved in without any rhyme or reason. How long she had been putting her things away in this fashion, I do not know, but I made it clear to her that it was unacceptable. She emphatically asked why and laid out her logic as to why it should not matter.

One of my personal favorite books was written by Admiral William H. McRaven (Ret.) called *Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life ... and Maybe the World*, and I would recommend it to you. In his book, Admiral McRaven says:

If you make your bed every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things in life matter.

If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right. And, if by chance you have a miserable day, you will come home to a bed that is made — that you made — and a made bed gives you encouragement that tomorrow will be better (pp. 111-112).

It is a foundation by which we can anchor our state of mind and continue positively in life. On this simple idea, 125 pages of pure human wisdom pour forth in this book.

These same ideas show up in our pathway to be more like God. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Keeping our heart is a task for ourselves alone. "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). It is a task which is easily swept under the rug. Who cares about what I listen to on the radio when I'm by myself? Who cares about the words that come out of my mouth when nobody is around to hear them? What does it matter if I do something that affects me and me alone if it's what I desire; the "victimless crime?"

Christians reason all these things daily when they think they will not be seen by anyone or affect anyone. To be the blessed man who "walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers" (Psalm 1:1) is to do that always, not just in the presence of others. It truly does not take much to destroy our soul. It is the little things which corrupt us. We are to "give no opportunity to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27) no matter how small or isolated that opportunity may be. We are creatures of habit. If we make it a habit to do something when we feel it will not affect others, eventually that becomes habit. That habit becomes a part of who we are in our heart. That little bit of leaven that we have allowed for our own enjoyment to toy around with suddenly starts to grow until eventually the whole lump is leavened (1 Corinthians 5:6). In Matthew 15:11, Jesus is speaking about how unclean foods are not the problem, "but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." He is talking about the heart of that man and the reflections of that heart.

What is in our heart? It should be that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). We must put to death what is earthly in us. We once walked in those sins but now we must put them all away (Colossians 3:5-11). Death is a complete separation. We

all have those whom we yearn to be with again who have crossed over the veil of death. We would be with them again if we had the chance because we long for them, but we cannot. Sin must be the same way. The only way those sins can be revisited is if they are not actually dead to us. This includes the “little things” or “private things” or the things which we think do not affect anyone but ourselves.

Little things in our lives, like my daughter learning the importance of something so mundane as her sock drawer, prepare us for bigger things. As Admiral McRaven said, “If you want to change your life and maybe the world — start off by making your bed!” (p. 9). If you want to change your life and save your soul, put those little things away, and allow the will of your own heart to be the will of your God in heaven who stitched you in your mother’s womb and knows you best.

Before We Criticize

By Heath Rogers

There are times when mistakes are made, and things need to be pointed out. And, unfortunately, we all know that offering criticism can sometimes make a bad situation even worse. Serious thought needs to go into what we will say. Maybe it would help if we would ask the following questions before offering criticism:

Why Am I Doing This?

Do I really want to help this person, or am I just doing this to make myself feel better? Am I trying to improve the situation, or do I just want to say, “I told you so!”? What is my motive? “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). Regardless of what the world believes, we don’t have the right to let off some steam at the expense of another. Criticism that is only going to make us feel better needs to be kept to ourselves.

Do I Have A Right To Criticize?

Was I available when this person could have used some help before? Can I sympathize with what they are going through? Can I offer some positive suggestions to go along with the criticism? Some people like to just sit on the sidelines and criticize the labors of others. Such people really have no right to criticize.

Have I Examined Myself?

It is not right for me to give criticism that I am not willing to take. Jesus says that I must make sure that the log is out of my eye first, then I can offer to help my brother get the speck out of his eye (Matthew 7:3-5). Criticism is respected when it comes from a respectable person, but no one appreciates a hypocrite.

What Will I Say, And How Will I Say It?

This is very important. I must choose my words very carefully. They have the power to build up or to destroy (Proverbs 12:18; 16:24). As Paul said, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). What we say, and the way we say it, will make all the difference in the world.

Will It Glorify God?

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Whose glory am I seeking? Am I saying something to help the cause of Christ or just to be heard? If it is just to be seen and heard by men, then truly I have my reward (Matthew 6:1-6).