



TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT

A Blue-Ribbon Attitude

March 7, 2020

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Proverbs 18:21 (NIV) • “The tongue has the power of life and death.”

Romans 12:2 (NIV) • “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Ephesians 4:22–5:20 (NIV) • “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. . . .

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. . . .

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

“Follow God’s example. . . . Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking,

which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. . . . Let no one deceive you with empty words. . . .

“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. . . . It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. . . .

“[Speak] to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Colossians 3:1-17 (NIV) • “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. . . .

“But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other. . . .

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. . . . Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Philippians 4:4-9 (NIV) • Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not

be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, . . . whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. . . . Put it into practice.”

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT”

If put-downs were an Olympic sport, some young teens would be among the strong contenders. In an effort to fit in with their friends, to distance themselves from people who seem to be dramatically unlike them, or to help sort out their own feelings about the changes going on within themselves, many often use cruel verbal repartee as a normal conversational mode. The influence of the media doesn't help. Smart-mouthed adolescents are the norm rather than the exception in broadcast media. Verbal one-upmanship sells movies, videos, and cable channels. And teens this age—and often their parents—just don't seem to get the impact it may have on them.

The apostle Paul understood the influence of what people are exposed to and what they subsequently think on. He understood that what a person allows to occupy their mind will sooner or later make an impact on what they say and what they do.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH “TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT”

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

1. Examine the tendency to put others down in order to build themselves up.
2. Understand that put-downs and an acidic tongue have no place in the Christian's life.
3. Explore ways to let the Spirit transform their behavior in this area.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) paper, writing utensils, scissors (optional: background music or soothing video playing in the background); (Activity B) slip of paper with conversation-starting statement for each set of three students in the class; stopwatch or clock (optional: buzzer, whistles, bells, or other noisemaker for the conversation monitor).

Connecting • A set of three ribbons with the words “Who I Am Makes a Difference” and a supply of pins, or some other token with those words, for each student; student lessons; Bibles.

Applying • Photocopies of the handout, p. 110.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students 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)
- >> Service project report

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.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will need to gather paper, writing utensils, scissors (optional: music or soothing video playing in the background). Before class list each student's name on a sheet of paper, leaving space between each name for a sentence to be written. (Option: If you have a very small class, write each student's name at the top of one sheet of paper, and let each student write their comment on the appropriate person's sheet. See below.)

Go • As the students arrive, give them each the sheet (or sheets) with all the names and instruct them to write the nicest thing they can about each person listed. When everyone is finished, collect the papers to compile and distribute later in the program. (Option: If you have a very large group you may want to create different lists—such as by gender or grade—and have only people in that same group responding.)

Debriefing • **Ask:** Why do you think we did this activity? (It has something to do with today's lesson.) What do you think will be the result when people get to read what has been written about them? Why is it important to say nice things about people? (God says we should love one another. It makes it easier to get along with them.) What happens when we don't say good things about people? (Relationships suffer.)

NOTE: Cut apart and compile these statements so that each student will have one sheet with the comments about them to take home. You can do this while they are working on the Application Activity, or have an adult helper working on this during the program.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Write enough conversation-starting statements on slips of paper to have one for

every three students in the class. Have a stopwatch or clock (optional: you might like to use buzzers, whistles, bells, or other noisemakers for the conversation monitor).

Get set • Have the students separate into groups of three. One person will be the conversation monitor and not talk, and one person will be given the slip of paper with the beginning statement to make (feel free to choose different statements that will work better in your setting).

Go • Tell the students that you are going to give one person in each group a statement to make to begin a discussion with one other person in the group. The third person will only listen and monitor the discussion. The topics themselves are not important. The important thing is *how* they talk about it. Each time one of the two in discussion says something negative about the other, puts down the other person's idea, calls the other person a name, or makes a negative sound or face, the conversation monitor is to stop the conversation and make the person restate their point. Allow them three minutes to talk.

Suggested topics:

- >> Women make terrible soldiers.
- >> Prayer should be allowed in public schools.
- >> The driving age should be raised to 21.

Debriefing • **Ask:** How did you do? Was it difficult to stay positive? Why or why not? What does this activity tell us about ourselves? (We are not in the habit of speaking nicely to each other.) Have students find, and a volunteer read, **Colossians 4:6**. **Say:** This text says that our speech should be gracious—seasoned with salt. What does that mean, to be seasoned with salt? (Salt flavors things, makes them taste good to eat. Nice words are easier to take than negative words. Salt is a preservative. It helps relationships go smoother.) Is it possible to have gracious speech at all times? What keeps that from happening? (Being under pressure, we're not used to it. We don't hear it around us.)

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

A group of frogs were traveling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around the pit. When they saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead.

The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all of their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead. Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died.

The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out.

When he got out, the other frogs said, "Did you not hear us?" The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

Find and read **Proverbs 18:21** together. "The tongue has the power of life and death" (NIV).

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Put-downs are "negative or belittling words or actions that show disrespect toward a person or groups of persons. . . . Putdowns are used because of fear, anger, ignorance, jealousy, need for power, frustration, lack of alternative communication skills, insecurity, habit, modeled behavior, or humor. Putdowns are often disguised as humor—as seen in television sitcoms. Verbal putdowns are used both directly (to another person's face) and indirectly (to a third person about someone else)." —From *No Putdowns*, at www.noputdowns.org.

Say: As God's children, we have no place for put-downs in our lives. As we will see, the Bible gives us specific instructions on how to think about and talk with one another.

Distribute or call attention to the student lesson, the Bible Insights section. Have volunteers take turns reading the passages.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: What relevance does this story have to our topic today? (It shows the importance of speaking kindly to people.) Why is it so important for people, especially Christians, to speak kindly to one another? (We never know how it may help someone. God commands it. It gives us and them strength to fight the battle against evil. It's a way of following Christ's example.) What happens when we don't? (We may drive someone to destruction. Others can't see Christ in us. Christians become discouraged. We set a poor example for nonbelievers.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Get ready • Distribute the handout sheet found on page 110 and the student lesson if you have not done so already. Call the students' attention to **Ephesians 4:29–5:20** and **Colossians 3:8–10** and have volunteers read the passages aloud.

Get set • Have the students, in small groups, go through the passages and list on the handout sheets current-day examples of what is listed there. These can be song/rap lyrics, headlines, dialogue from movies or shows, or passages from books or magazines.

Go • Go through the worksheet with the students when they are finished.

Debriefing • **Say:** As you can see, we are bombarded with all the things the Bible speaks against. We need to be so careful that we don't imitate what we hear. Or better yet, we need to alter what we expose ourselves to in order to live as agents of God's kingdom.

Ask: What are some things we can do to keep from imitating the natural way of speaking and acting toward others? (Fill our minds with good things, limit our exposure to them by cutting down the time or type of stuff we listen to and watch, be aware of our speech and nonverbal communication. Really listen when adults tell us we have an attitude. Apologize and try again. Pray.)

Have someone read Philippians 4:8. **Say:** This passage gives us clear guidelines about what we allow inside our heads. Have someone read verse 9. Verse 9 says we should put into practice all of these things. Your challenge for the week is to develop the habit of looking for and speaking only of the good in others. By God's grace you can. You've made a pretty good start today. Remind them of the positive comment sheets that they created for one another in Beginning Activity one. Let them know you will be giving them the comments about themselves to take home with them.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

This activity is based on the student lesson illustration about the three ribbons. Have a set of three ribbons, each with the words "Who I Am Makes a Difference," and a supply of pins. If necessary, substitute some other token with the words on it.

Tell the students that you appreciate them, and that they make a difference in your life. (Try to be honest here.) With the help of your associates, pin a blue ribbon on each student.

Say: Let's start our own movement of building others up. Then give each student two more ribbons and challenge them to award one to someone else, and then to give that person the last one to award to someone else. Ask them to be ready to report their experiences next week.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Can a put-down be nonverbal? Explain.
2. Can a compliment be as damaging as a put-down? In what way?
3. What should you do if someone starts putting you down?
4. Where does the tendency to put others down come from?
5. Do the verses in Colossians and Ephesians mean that we should sing only religious songs, read only religious books, and watch only religious programs or videos? Why or why not?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Though it is natural to do so, we have to guard against the tendency to put down others—or ourselves. Christ died for each one of us. We are all valuable in His eyes. When we put others or ourselves down, we devalue the gift He gave us in giving His life. Words may not kill immediately, but they can damage and ultimately be fatal to others. Let's start today allowing God to help us change our destructive ways of dealing with each other.



STUDENT LESSON

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March 7, 2020

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!” (Psalm 106:3, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 22, Christian Behavior:** “We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things that will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. . . . We are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 24-27

A BLUE-RIBBON ATTITUDE

A teacher decided to honor each of her students by telling them the difference they had made in her life. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon that read “Who I Am Makes a Difference.” Afterward she decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact

positive recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons to go out and do the same for others. They were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom, and report back to the class.

One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company who had helped him with his career-planning project. The boy gave the junior executive a blue ribbon. Then he gave him two extra ribbons, and said, “We’re doing a class project on recognition, and we’d like you to go out and find somebody to honor. Give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra ribbon so they can honor a third person. I’ll call you in a few days to see what happened.”

Later that day the junior executive went in to see his usually grouchy boss. He told his boss that he admired him for being a creative genius. The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon. His surprised boss said, “Well, sure.” As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, “Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school, and we want to keep this going and find out how it affects people.”

That night the boss came home to his 14-year-old son and sat him down. He said, “The junior executive came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I’m a creative genius. Then he gave me this blue ribbon that says ‘Who I Am Makes a Difference’. He gave me

an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you.

"My days are really hectic, and when I get home I sometimes scream at you for not getting good enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess. But tonight I just want you to know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You're a great kid, and I love you."

"Thanks, Dad," the boy managed quietly. "I was just thinking about whether or not it was even worth living, since I didn't think I'd ever be able to please you and make you love me."

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Colossians 3:8-12.
- » You and your friends are teasing each other, calling each other names, talking about your lack of abilities in various areas, and about family members. Then someone says something that hits a little too close to home. Suddenly things get ugly; a physical fight is about to start. How do you defuse the situation? Should you call in an adult? Why or why not? What do you do to keep it from happening again?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

- » Read 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:4; 1 John 2:6.
- » In everything we do, we should be like Jesus. Only kindness and care should ever come from us in dealing with others. In every situation and interaction, the person(s) we are with should see Jesus in us—including our parents. Jesus always demonstrated love. His words were always kind and loving.

This is evidence of whom we belong to and spend time with.

- » In what areas do you need the Holy Spirit's help in transforming your critical spirit?

- » How can you display the love and kindness Jesus did when in a difficult situation?

- » Unscramble the following words and place them in the correct blank.

ttiamrios
rhidecln
oelv
isleHmf
feifngor
srficeaic

"Therefore be _____ of God as dear _____. And walk in _____, as Christ also has loved us and given _____ for us, an _____ and a _____ to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:1, 2 NKJV).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Colossians 4:6.
- » "I was just joking." How many times have you said that? A wise man once said that half of all jest is the truth. For Christians, half-truths won't do. The put-downs, the comebacks, the wisecracks, the double messages have no place in the Christian's life—or in the life of anyone who is a member of the human race, for that matter. An organization called No Put-downs is dedicated to wiping out the practice.
- » On the organization's website, put-downs and their destructive results are thoroughly

analyzed. According to the organization, “put-downs take many forms, both verbal and nonverbal, including: dismissal or rejection, in the form of critical or slighting remarks; body language—rolled eyes, curled lip, shrugged shoulders, sneer; mimicking or mockery; words or actions used as weapons; self-put-downs; tone of voice, such as sarcasm or insincerity; stereotyping.” (For more information, visit www.noput-downs.org.)

- » One way to get over our nasty human habit of besting each other with our tongues is to be careful of what we put into our brains. Since the way of the media is often to put people down and go for the negative, we have to be careful of what we watch, listen to, and read. We have to make a conscious effort to take in good stuff. Just as good food makes a strong body, good thoughts make a strong mind.
- » You’ve got to, as Philippians 4:9 says, “put it into practice” (NIV). And when you’ve gotten into the habit of filling your mind with the good, the good will come out in your speech and actions.

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Fill in the blanks to discover what God wants us to know about “Transforming the Critical Spirit.”

1. “Let your _____ be _____ full of _____, seasoned with _____, so that you may know how to _____ everyone” (Colossians 4:6, NIV).

2. “Whatever is _____, whatever is _____ whatever is _____ whatever is _____, whatever is _____, whatever is _____, whatever is _____—if anything is _____

or _____—think about such things. . . . Put it into practice” (Philippians 4:8, 9, NIV).

- 3. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others _____ according to _____ needs, that it may benefit those who listen. . . . Get _____ of all _____, _____ and anger, brawling and _____, along with every form of _____. Be _____ and _____ to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God’s _____. . . . Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of _____, or of greed. . . . Nor should there be _____, _____ or _____, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. . . . Be filled with the _____, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:29–5:19, NIV).

4. “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: _____, rage, malice, slander, and filthy _____ from your lips. Do not lie to each other. . . . Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly _____, clothe yourselves with compassion, _____, _____, _____ and _____” (Colossians 3:8–12, NIV).

5. “Let your _____ be _____ to _____ men. The Lord is at _____” (Philippians 4:5, NKJV).

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Ephesians 4:29-32.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Are your mouth and your face getting you into trouble? Have your parents or other adults asked you to straighten your face, stop rolling your eyes, watch your mouth, adjust your attitude, or not talk to them in “that” tone of voice? And have you felt frustrated because you didn’t realize what you were doing? Just like anything else, changing these habits of responding will take some effort on your part. After all the devil loves to get us to give in to our human nature. You may have to spend some quiet time thinking about what you do and why you do it, then praying that the Spirit will help you come up with alternatives. God (and hopefully the adults and friends in your life) is willing to forgive and give you the strength to adopt new and more positive ways of communicating.

Friday APPLYING

(Consider doing this activity on a day other than Friday.)

- » Read Philippians 4:8, 9.
- » Our society seems to honor the put-down. Over the next several hours, keep record of all the put-downs you hear and all the things that build others up. These can be from people you live with or what you hear in the media (TV, internet, radio, magazines, or newspapers). Use the following chart to help you keep track. Put a star by the put-downs or buildups coming from your own lips. Whatever the ratio, ask God to help you eliminate put-downs and practice building others up. In fact, you can start by thinking of alternatives to the put-downs you have delivered or that you have heard. Remember, silence is always an option.

	PUT-DOWNS	BUILDUPS	ALTERNATIVES
6:00 A.M. - 8:00 A.M.			
8:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.			
12:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.			
4:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.			
8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.			

