

## USING TACT IN OUR SPEECH

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The Apostle Paul admonishes us to let our “speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6). This graceful, seasoned speech calls for words that will best suit a person and a situation. Different people will hear and react to our words differently. We need to recognize this and speak so as to accomplish the best for one another.

We sometimes call this using “tact,” which is the idea of using good judgment in dealing with others. Some know how to be tactful in their words, that is, they are insightful as to the character of others and sensitive as to their communication with them. Unfortunately, some throw their counsel, or opinions, around like a bull in a china shop, making a big mess with words that are ill-timed, harsh, or out of place.

Our attempts at “constructive” criticism can be the time we use the least tactfulness. We all can criticize, and it is needed at times, but few seem to know how to do so with grace and edification. No one likes criticism or medicine, but both can be made to go down a little easier. If we see a problem, it may not be wise to tackle it with the figurative “two-by-four over the head” when a gentle, caring nudge in the right direction would do wonders. Some individuals may indeed need, and want, the direct approach, while other people would react best to a less confrontational method.

It is regrettable that feelings get hurt and friends [brethren] are driven apart, when a few moments of thought about our words and the situation would have prevented it. The *timing* of our words can be very important, and sometimes the less said the better (Proverbs 10:19). It takes a great amount of wisdom and effort to keep our tongues in check (James 3:1-12). Whatever the circumstances may be, let us strive to use tactful words that are “fitly spoken” (Proverbs 25:11).