

“KNOWING WHEN TO SPEAK & WHEN TO BE SILENT”

SCRIPTURES: Esther 4: 6-17 & Matthew 2: 1-16

KEY CONCEPTS: One aspect of our spiritual maturity notes how & when to speak or remain silent for the good of others & ourselves.

QUOTES ABOUT SILENCE: (Online)

- *Silence is the true friend that never betrays.* ~Confucius
- *Silence is a source of great strength.* ~Lao Tzu
- *Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel to all dull discourses and all foolish acts, a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as after disappointment.* ~Henry David Thoreau
- *All noise is waste. So cultivate quietness in your speech, in your thoughts, in your emotions. Speak habitually low. Wait for attention and then your low words will be charged with dynamite.* ~Elbert Hubbard
- *You hesitate to stab me with a word, and know not - silence is the sharper sword.* ~Samuel Johnson
- *The best answer to anger is silence.* ~Author Unknown
(Taken from: <http://www.quoteagarden.com/silence.html>)
- *If you can't say something nice about someone, then don't say anything at all.* (Dad)

TRANSITION:

So, if silence is golden, then what are the advantages of holding our tongue or remaining quiet? On this Father's Day 2010, what did we learn not only from God, our Heavenly Father, but also our earthly fathers? What might these influential men have taught us about – when to speak & when to remain silent?

In today's readings we find seemingly contrasting responses to two life & death situations. First our reading from the book of *Esther*, calls for Queen Esther to speak up on behalf of her people – to prevent a Jewish genocide at the hands of Haman.

Then in our reading from the book of *Matthew*, we find that the wise men who came to see the Baby Jesus actually protected (& maybe even saved his life) by NOT speaking up about His whereabouts to King Herod.

This morning, I'd like to spend some time evaluating – for us in the 21st century – when we need to speak up & when we need to be silent. With that in mind...

WILL YOU PRAY WITH ME?

PRAYER:

Hebrew & Christian scriptures are filled with admonitions to both speak up **AND** be silent! So, when are we called to “speak up” & when are we called “to be silent”? As you might imagine, there is not **ONE** set answer to this question. Every situation in our lives requires a process of discernment in order for us to know “when to speak, when to be silent”.

“WHEN TO REMAIN SILENT”—MATTHEW 2: 1-16: (Online)

One of the times that silence is life saving is found in today's Gospel reading. You're familiar with the story – since it's one of the birth narratives of Jesus. Traditionally called “wise men”, or Magi, these men came to pay homage to a new king – Baby Jesus – which enraged the sitting King, King Herod. The wise men were more than likely literate, political officials from the courts of Parthia, Armenia or regions east of Judea. It was common – in that day – for

other countries (regimes) to send emissaries to greet & give gifts to new kings or rulers.

This visit highlighted the conflict between the spiritual leader that Jesus would become in time & the political king chosen by the Romans – who occupied Israel – Herod. The conflict became so great that, even with the Wise Men leaving by another route AND keeping silent about Jesus' whereabouts – even still, Herod, came after the 2 year old Baby Jesus – which resulted in the death of all 2 year olds within that region.

The mark of a mature (or a maturing) Christian – or spiritual person – comes as we actively engage in “speaking when we need to & remaining silent when we need to.” People who master when to be silent & when to speak up are the ones who change the world & improve the lives of other people along the way.

So, as mature Christians, when might we need to remain silent?

- When ***innocent babies*** (& others) are at risk of being killed if we talk or speak.
- When people – in leadership who ***aren't people of integrity*** – are capable of handling the truth & if spoken to will make life a living hell for everyone within their reign
- When we are told ***confidential information*** that must be held to protect others
- When the ***truth we know is too much*** for another person to handle at that moment
- When what we know is too painful for another to hear & even if you tell them it'll only hurt them – with ***nothing being changed***

QUOTES ON “WHEN TO SPEAK”:

- *The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.* ~Dorothy Nevill
- *The words you choose to say something are just as important as the decision to speak.* ~Author Unknown
- *The difference between a smart man and a wise man is that a smart man knows what to say, a wise man knows whether or not to say it.* ~Frank M. Garafola

(Taken from: <http://www.quotegarden.com/speaking.html>)

- *Words have incredible power. They can make people's hearts soar, or they can make people's hearts sore.* ~Dr. Mardy Grothe
- *Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.* ~Winston Churchill

(Taken from: http://www.pivotalpublicspeaking.com/quotes_list.htm)

WHEN TO SPEAK UP- ESTHER 4: 6-17:

So, when do we need to speak up as maturing followers of Christ? What about the idea that “the surest way for evil to prevail is for good men (& women) to do nothing”.

The reading from the book of Esther calls for a “closeted Jewish woman” who had ascended to be Queen to “come out & speak up for her people”. Today’s passage recounted Esther’s secret back & forth conversation with her cousin/adoptive father, Mordecai, via messages delivered by the eunuch, Hathach.

So, as mature Christians, when might we need to speak up?

- When ***innocent people*** (babies, women and the marginalized) are being abused, mistreated – if we DON'T SPEAK UP! (i.e. inner cities, Sudan, Rwanda, etc.)
- When we have ***spiritual, political & corporate voices*** to make changes – even small ones – for the good of others, the environment & the world

- When you have **something meaningful to say** that will add value another's life, comfort for a hurting life/heart or change an unbearable situation
- When what you say **edifies & honors** God, the person(s) listening or a situation
- When the **words are spoken in love** – to the proper person(s) at the proper time for the proper reason – then you must speak
- When what you say brings **forth a positive spin** or adds truth that “corrects” someone's misperception or inaccurate information
- When we're the **most afraid** to speak up about something “larger than ourselves”

CLOSING THOUGHTS & A CHALLENGE:

Sometimes silence is golden & sometimes speaking the truth in love makes a life golden!

Extroverts: For those of us who are extroverted & spend most of our time talking, maybe we can “dial it back” – at least once a day, where we stop talking for at least 10 minutes - so that when we DO speak, we actually have something valuable to say.

Introverts: For those of us who are introverted & spend most of our time not talking, maybe we can “commit to once a day speaking a truth to another person, ourselves or God” that will add value to our lives or the life of another person.