

**AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #101 (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 7/30/20)**

**“A closed mouth gathers no foot.”**

Have you ever stuck your foot in your mouth? Me, too... All of us probably have at some point in our lives. I think the problem is magnified in our world today because we have smart phone videos and social media posts that keep replaying what we said or typed. Perhaps we could learn from Solomon who reminds us...

“...there’s a time to be silent and a time to speak.” (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

A good time to remain silent is when we have nothing kind or loving to say. A friend’s mom always told him and his siblings, “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.” Then he reflected, “Maybe that’s why she was so quiet and didn’t say much!” We often teach this to our children, but sometimes those less-than-kind or loving words slip out of our mouths and hurt someone... even if we didn’t mean to. Sometimes we would be better off to bite our tongues and remain silent. (After going through a challenging building project a number of years ago, I was surprised I had a tongue left—because I had to bite my tongue so much!)

We should speak against the injustices of the world and speak up for those who have no voice, but we don’t have to speak (with our mouths or posts on social media) against or argue every Facebook or Twitter post with which we disagree. Sometimes, it’s best to be silent... and not stir the proverbial pot. What is worse—losing an argument or losing a relationship? Sometimes we speak before thinking or as if we were an expert on something, and then we stick our foot in our mouth. But Mark Twain reminds us, “A closed mouth gathers no foot.” Abraham Lincoln reminds us: “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.”

When we end up with our foot in our mouth or hurt someone with our words, we should apologize and ask forgiveness—from the person we hurt and from God. God loves us and will always forgive us, but he wants us to learn from our mistakes and not keep repeating them—and not keep hurting others with our words. I wonder what might happen if we all took this seriously and prayed every morning:

“Take control of what I say, O LORD, and guard my lips.” (Psalm 141:3)

Without a doubt, our world would be a much better place if we all could learn to guard our mouths. Let us pray for God to help us learn when to be silent and not put our foot in our mouths—so that instead of hurting others with our words, they hear and see Jesus in us!

**PRAYER:**

Loving God, please forgive me for all the times I have stuck my foot in my mouth or hurt people with my words. Come and live in me and guide me! Please, take control of what I say, and guard my lips—so that everything I say (or type on social media) points people to you! Amen.

**LIVE IT!**

Memorize Psalm 141:3 and pray it every morning. If you stick your foot in your mouth or hurt someone with your words, apologize to and ask forgiveness from the person you hurt and God; then ask God to help you remain silent or speak kind and loving words next time.