

Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10



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Vaguebooking

Please avoid “vaguebooking.”

What’s that, you say? Vaguebooking is when someone posts a comment on social media that is intentionally vague, but still makes people wonder and worry. For example, “I don’t need mean people in my life right now...”

People vaguebook because they don’t want to be guilty of gossiping or openly trashing someone on line, but they still want to vent their complaints to the world, and see who will join the pity party.

Vaguebooking is not an acceptable substitute for gossip—it’s really just a subtler form of gossip. Because everyone who cares (or who are just curious) will respond, “Oh no, I’m not sure what you’re going through, but I’m happy to help!” and then the whole gossipy story comes out anyway.

Or, more likely, everyone *already knows* who the mean people are, and they are effectively slandered even though their names are not officially used. The fake anonymity is a thinly-veiled assault that is almost impossible to respond to. Social media is not the place for such attacks (Matt. 18:15).

The rules of Christian behavior don’t change just because you’re on line.

—John Guzzetta

The Stranger

A few years after I was born, my Dad met a stranger who was new to our small town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer and invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted, and was around from that day forward.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in our home and family. In my young mind, he had a special niche.

My parents were diligent instructors. Mom taught me good from evil, and Dad taught me to obey. But the stranger was our storyteller. He would keep us spellbound for hours on end with adventures, mysteries, and comedies.

If I wanted to know anything about politics, history, or science, he always gave me the answers. He took my family to our first major league baseball game. He made me laugh, and he made me cry. The stranger never stopped talking, but Dad didn't seem to mind.

Sometimes, Mom would get up quietly while the rest of us were focused on the stranger, and she would go to the kitchen to find peace and quiet. I wonder now if she ever prayed for the stranger to leave?

Dad ruled our house with certain moral convictions, but the stranger never felt obligated to honor them. Profanity, for example, was *never* allowed inside our home—not from us, not from our friends, not from our visitors. But our stranger always got away with using four-letter words that burned my ears and made Dad squirm and Mom blush.

Dad didn't permit alcohol, but the stranger encouraged us to try it on a regular basis. He made cigarettes look cool, cigars manly, and pipes distinguished. He talked very freely about sex. His comments were often blatant and suggestive. I know that my concepts about relationships were heavily influenced by the stranger. Time after time, he opposed my parents' values, but he was seldom rebuked, and never asked to leave, no matter how much damage he did.

Fifty years have passed since the stranger moved in. We call him by his initials, TV.

—author unknown

Organized Personal Work

More can be accomplished in a congregation if personal workers work together in some kind of unified plan. If certain times are set for the work, more people will work and more enthusiasm will be given.

The second step is the selection of workers. Many of these will be volunteers. Others must be encouraged to participate. If the elders of a congregation request certain ones to do a particular work, they usually consider it an honor to be asked.

Evangelism. Finding contacts can be the work of every family in the church. Home Bible studies are a good way to accomplish this.

Aged, sick, widows. These should be seen to regularly, and help extended where help is needed (James 1:27). They need the kindness of a visit, and we should take advantage of such opportunities to bring them closer to the Lord. The sick might speak of their problems, but only if they want to. Those who visit the sick should not tell about their own operations or diseases, nor give advice about how to get well. The physical care of the patient can be taken care of by professionals. The object is to leave him in a happier and more cheerful mood.

Inactive members. One of the greatest needs in the church is for closer fellowship among members. Inactive members need to be made to feel a part of the church and its work. Those who have quit coming to worship altogether should be visited and encouraged to start coming once again.

Those facing problems. Upcoming marriages, problems with raising children, struggles with addiction, are all good times for visits.

New members. New members should be attended to often during the first six months or year, in an informal social setting. They should have opportunities to meet and get to know each member, and take an interest in the local work.

All such efforts do as much good for the faith of the ones doing the work, as they do for the ones receiving the visits!

How to Change People

When a man is lost, he needs to change; he needs to obey the gospel. There are ways to go about this.

Do not make him angry. Some fellow preachers have told me they cannot convert a person until they have made him angry; but I have found that I cannot convert a person after I have made him angry. I know that the truth spoken without compromise will often give offense. But most people who get angry do so because of some bitter, insulting statement that has nothing to do with the truth of the gospel.

Do not avoid the truth. Of course, don't go to the other extreme and be so careful to hurt no feelings that the truth is danced around. The Lord wants us to preach His truth, not to make everyone like us. You are not trying to make the fellow feel good, but to see his error and come to the Lord.

Show the benefits of change. You may demolish false doctrine and sinful behavior, but you must also show how the gospel is better. Hope of heaven, life without guilt, peace beyond understanding, joy beyond measure, and the fruit of the Spirit, are good places to start.

Stress the things you already agree on. Differences must be discussed, and a true Christian will show the line between truth and error, sin and righteousness. But we can start by noting the things we agree on. When Paul stood before Agrippa, he asked him, "believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." When I am teaching someone and he says that he believes the churches should not be fighting one another, I hasten to agree and show how the early disciples were unified (John 17:21, 1 Cor. 1:11), and then describe the basis for having unity once again. Help him locate the answer in the Bible.

Follow the golden rule. Be respectful. You may have had the same misconceptions if you grew up in his circumstances.

Trust the gospel. There is something more powerful for changing the heart than all the suggestions I could give—it is the gospel (Rom. 1:16). His word will never return to Him void. —*Otis Gatewood*, p. 166–78.