

## Good Things Well Said

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I had heard that he was a good teacher. His name was Will, an average looking, with an average build, average sort of guy; but he drove a lot of people crazy. He was a math teacher by trade but when you met him, you really wondered how he could hold down a job as a teacher.

A few folks would greet Will after church on Sunday; fewer still would ask a question or attempt conversation.

I enjoyed talking to Will. I could usually find him standing alone near the entryway. I never had to wait in line and I never thought I was interrupting a conversation.

Will was never rude, but folks were frustrated with him because he was mostly silent. He was not mute; he had no speech impediment. He simply took the scriptures very, very, very, seriously.

**But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.**

**For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.**

—James 1:19 and 3:2

I would greet Will, “How are you doing?” and then wait for his reply. I might w-a-i-t a full minute before he returned a simple, “I’m doing ok.” (I really didn’t mind waiting.)

I might then ask him an open-ended question. I remember times when I waited a five full minutes for an answer. I still did not mind because I knew that he was determined to control his speech.

I lost touch with Will when we moved away, but I have always admired the way he guarded his tongue.

Jim, on the other hand, was not silent. He was a preacher, and one of the best. His content was always enlightening and his manner was respectful, cordial, and full of concern. Regardless of his subject, even the things we *needed* to hear were presented in such a way that you were grateful as a listener.

Though opposite in many ways Will and Jim had something in common. Described by a seldom used Bible term, they were men of ‘good report.’ The ancient word behind this phrase is used only one time in the Bible. Its dictionary definition is: *fair-speaking* or *sounding well*. The term was not used to describe good things that were said as much as the person who spoke good things. At the same time, it did not describe eloquence of speech or respect people might have for the speaker. It was used to describe the person who was known for speaking good content and speaking in a good and tasteful manner.

One author commented that *good report* “signifies the delicacy which guards the lips.” That describes both of my friends. They guarded their lips and what came out was always good, pleasant, attractive and acceptable. Those who are of ‘good report’ are rare. Who do you know that can be described this way? The Apostle Paul encouraged:

**Whatever things are...of good report...  
Dwell on these things.**

—Philippians 4:8

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