

Speaking to the soul

Getting it wrong

Singing cheerful songs to a person with a heavy heart is like taking someone's coat in cold weather or pouring vinegar in a wound. Proverbs 25:20

This is a painful proverb because we all have the capacity to be insensitive. Singing cheerful songs is obviously lovely, but to impose this on someone who is depressed is the very last thing that we should ever do. We can all do the wrong thing. We can all say things that are inappropriate and act in a way that we later realise was extremely unhelpful. The question we need to ask is: How can we avoid getting it so agonisingly wrong?

Let's begin with humility! We need to be aware of our capacity to get things wrong. We are always learners in the area of human relationships. Am I the only person who has called another person by the wrong name? Probably not! It's horribly embarrassing, but while moments like these are humbling, they are thoroughly good for us. Secondly, we need to be quick to admit our mistakes and seek forgiveness. If we are living humbly, this will be a natural response and will normally enable a relationship to be restored. Finally, we need to work on our listening skills. If we don't listen carefully to other people, we will continually

be at risk of responding inappropriately. Listening may sound easy, but it is hard work and demands our full attention. If we listen to others with care, it is highly unlikely that we will do and say the wrong things.

All of these responses are summed up in the word 'love'. We need to step into each day with a healthy dose of humility, praying that the God of love will so fill us with his Holy Spirit that we will respond lovingly to every situation.

QUESTION

What have you learned from those times when you have said completely the wrong thing?

PRAYER

Lord God, I confess that I have often got it wrong. Fill me with your Spirit so that I will act with love in every situation. Amen

