

Christian Perspectives: But I was only joking!

Generally, 'But I was only joking!' is declared after someone else has been offended, or hurt by something you said or did. Our words and our actions carry impact. My mother taught me to say what you mean, and mean what you say.

February 14 was Valentine's Day and many cards, gifts, chocolates, flowers and words of love and endearment were shared. It is probably safe to say there were no follow-ups with, 'But I was only joking!'

February 18 was designated in Ontario as Family Day as an opportunity to celebrate family connections. I am blessed with a dear mother-in-law, husband, daughter, and son and his beloved wife and three children. They all bring me much JOY.

Have you celebrated your biological connections? Family also goes beyond those connections. For instance, I have a dear friend whom I call my 'chosen sister.' As a pastor, those in my congregation are loved family members. A few special friends from a worldwide club to which I belong are on my family telephone list. Within all of these connections we share our challenges, triumphs and joys. Would you ever want to say or do anything to any of those special individuals for which you would have to apologize and say, 'But I was only joking!'

Proverbs 18:21 says, 'The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.' Will the fruit of the words you eat and which you serve up to others be words which will bring satisfaction and JOY?

Out of love we need to uplift and encourage one another. I like the song, 'You lift me up, so I can stand on mountains.' The concept of the wind under the wings of a bird, lifting it up to soar to greater heights also illustrates part of our purpose in life. You can't lift up while using negative words or actions which you must later explain away with, 'But, I was only joking!'

Unfortunately, far too many people tear others apart with never a thought to what they are doing. Perhaps it is just the long, bitterly cold, snowy, icy winter which is causing brain freeze but, all under the guise of humour, there has been a proliferation of posts in social media with parents lamenting having children, and especially on 'no school, snow days' and holidays. Oh, if you ask them, they would say they love their children, but their printed words and pictures say otherwise. They publicly gripe, complain, bitch and bellyache about the actions of their children. Shared pictures and comments indicate their children have driven them to drink, to want to run away or to trade children or not even have children.

They complain about their children fighting, sulking, pouting, and being lazy, mouthy, sloppy, detached and distant. Interestingly, much of the same negativity is spewed out about spouses!

You get what you think about, and what you say. Words are powerful. In light of 'Say what you mean, and mean what you say,' what is being said? What if the child or spouse reads these public laments? Will they be raised up to new heights when you later say, 'But I was only joking'?

Think of how your child or spouse will feel when they hear or come across words you said about them that speak of their lovely smile, their effort, dedication and enthusiasm, their accomplishments, their loving gestures, how helpful they are, their creativity and how proud you are to be their parent (or spouse), and that you are glad they are in your life. You just may get more of the same.

'Repetitive complaining will attract things for you to complain about. Repeated gratitude will attract things for you to be thankful for' (Enlightened Consciousness). I encourage you to be careful of your words and actions that they be holy, which is to be in perfect alignment in your life (and words) with the pure, selfless love of God. Be mindful of whether your words and actions lift up and encourage. Be known as a person who is the wind beneath the wings of others. Be known as a person who speaks of others with JOY!

By Rev. Maxine R McLellan,