

*For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.*

*Psalm 36:9*

# *the* LifeWord *—*

with Michael Green



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Dear Friend:

## **SNAKE BITE**

The scene was familiar but this time I had the different perspective to just stand back and watch.

Linda had just finished speaking, literally knocking the cover off of the ball. The Word, the anointing and the delivery, all strong. God had been good. I knew that she had prayerfully prepared and worked so hard on the Message. I was proud of her.

As the service ended a sweet group of folks moved her way to bless her and thank her for the Word. Appropriately appreciative but humbled, she returned the affirmations and spoke encouragement back. It was genuine and real. In these humbling moments you never pander to get such response because you know that only God has afforded you this opportunity to bless His people.

And while the mood was sweet, you just know, though, there will always be one or two who can't wait to jump up into the Goofy Chair. The act was predictable as one attendee ambled to the front looking piously serious, grabbing her hand to gain utmost control/attention and then loudly playing to those gathered to announce, *"I just want to say... that wasn't good"* (Now, pause for maximum drama, hold your breath for a moment longer, then finish) *"That was great."*

Oh, at this point everyone is supposed to sigh in relief, laugh and clap with giddy joy that a reverent, heartfelt pouring out of God's Word had actually been deemed worthy of some sanctimonious approval. Innocuous words on paper but childish manipulation in presentation and desired effect. How about just a simple *"Thank You, God Bless You"* sans the theatrics?

Such technique is a calculated delivery of hopeful shakiness to garner response but Linda was gracious and kind. Usually when that is pulled on me I just smile and think to myself, *"...they honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me"* or *"they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, adders' poison is under their lips"*. Jesus called those who willfully set snares, *"snakes"* in the grass (The *"in the grass"* part is mine).

Solomon, James and Paul, throughout their writings, speak of gracious affirmations, words from a pure flow, loving honor and speaking strength. Nowhere do you see them lapsing into, much less condoning, silly language that would try to control or even dare to inflict a twinge of intended uneasiness.

That's the stuff that happens on a playground where adolescent cutting, hurtful barbs, are usually punctuated with a big *"Ha-ha"*, followed by a quick, *"Oh, I was just kidding"*.

I have also found that the repetitive *"Just Kidding"* tag often reveals a glimpse of character, usually negative.

Speaking of character, one comes to mind. This self impressed Pharisee would, with argumentative dexterity, frequently delight in saying some of the silliest, abrupt things, waiting for shock value, only to then tag it with a hyena laugh, *"Oh, I'm just kidding!"*

No Brutus, you're not. You just can't get away with the full range of your hostility and you have to conceal it and shape it with a silly *"Ha-ha"*. *"Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, 'I was only joking!'"* – Proverbs 26:18 and 19/NKJ

The dilemma is insidious and if you can't quite wrap your hands around the neck of this snake to fight but yet still dare to make a fully merited righteous stand, you will be met by a mock shock, self righteous postulation, *"Oh, you're wrong, that's not what I meant. Don't you know?"*

Don't let this stuff discourage you or take you down!

During our challenging times, we must gravitate to those who will practice the Bible pattern of speaking into each other and affirming one another in order to see God's best developed in all of our lives. His objective: that we might be "*thoroughly furnished unto every good work!*" Thus developing a place where we can put our weight down.

We should walk around with the desire to speak words that will encourage and bless. He has promised that it will come back to us. In other words, we all get blessed.

So, why don't we make it a calling? A project that will glorify God the Father and build HIS Kingdom, starting with one conversation at a time? Wouldn't that be a great thing to be known for? Genuine words will win over emotional gamesmanship every time; they are the best anti venom treatment.

Just know, along the way, we will not be *immune* to the harassing hisses but we do know that we can be *inoculated* from the sting of some silly asp.

*Michael*

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