

ACCENT-IDENTITY

Leaving the doctor's office Friday afternoon I noticed a young couple leaning over the sidewalk railing, picking blackberries. "Good, aren't they," I commented. "Yes," she replied, "are they safe to eat?"

Knowing then that they were tourists (no one from this area would question the safety of gorging on this annual berry bonanza!), I also quickly surmised that they were from Europe. Switzerland, as it turned out. We chatted a few minutes longer while they enjoyed the succulent fruit and I enjoyed their accent.

Coincidentally, later that day friends in another part of Europe emailed both to celebrate their progress in learning a new language and to ask for our continued prayer support as they absorb and adapt to their new culture. It's not an easy task nor is it without risks. Here's part of their email: "One day last month a lady asked Maureen 'are you married?' Maureen said 'no - and I have three daughters!' You can imagine the eyebrow raising that caused. The funny thing is Maureen had no idea she had made that mistake until her teammate pointed it out!"

Reading that email reminded me of my early attempts to learn German, my husband's mother tongue. We and another couple had gone out one sweltering summer evening and wanting to impress them with my growing acquisition of their language. I declared (with ill-founded confidence): "Phew, it's hot!" Trouble is there is just one letter that's different between the spelling and pronunciation of "he" and "it". The silence was as stifling as the weather.

Even as he denied Christ, a little girl confronted Peter: "You were with Him – your speech betrays you!"

I'm irrevocably "Canadian, eh" but I long that my speech be filled with words that honour God.

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt..." (Colossians 4:6)