



## *Do Ya' Say Or Hear Too Much?*

*“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words...”*—John 6:68

Expletive use by base individuals is so gross! It as well as extremely crude language replete with non-stop sexual innuendos has become increasingly more common on radio, on television, in movies and in the workplace today. I don't have to tell you that. And many writers and producers for the media are intent on pushing things over all limits of morality. The most vial and offensive speech sells and the public is willing to allow it. Christians even seem to have thrown up their arms in surrender to it. It's all so unnecessary and it only ugly-fies those verbalizing it.

Hardcore profanity or even softer-core vulgar language—it's real abuse. We can talk about being kind to trees, spotted owls and the environment, but when will this pollution of minds cease? Yes, it's all noise pollution of the most horrendous kind. It only displays a symptom of the real root problem inside of people's hearts (sin—a war against God. That's why His name is taken in vain in connection with it. Is Buddha's name used as a curse word?).

It all hurts and dishonors the Lord. It degrades people made in His image. Talking that includes cussing, crude perverted expressions, and swear words block the beauty of noble ideas that are communicated by clean thinking people. Speech that is accusatory or that condemns others with pointed finger is so inflammatory—it totally devastates good relationships by making people feel furious. Even in cars the sentiments are transmitted and it leads to road rage. Communication like that can inflict deep wounds literally inside the souls of people who are battered by it. Do you say too much? If so, stop it! Please repent. Remember, even the toughest people are more sensitive and vulnerable than we can imagine.

Ungodly conversation will create a grimy, smutty, oppressive and unspiritual atmosphere—one that is very hostile to all that's constructive. Its demeaning sound can strongly grieve the Holy Spirit. It will drown out the Spirit's gentle voice and oh how we all need to hear that voice today. Nothing else in our ears will compare. That's why God's Word addresses our communication head-on in Colossians 3:8 commanding, ***“Put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”***

Paul, who penned that sentence, went on in this same letter to tell Christians to, ***“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”*** (4:5-6, nkjv).

We are for clean thinking, speaking and living; the kind that comforts and heals! We are for telling others the Good News!

Everyone worships someone or something these days. In fact, I find that people often love to talk most about what they worship. What's most on the heart is often most on the lips—out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Garbage in garbage out—do you import treasure into your mind or trash... or both? Do you listen to and see the wrong things, or do you spend lots of time in the Word and in prayer? Whatever, it will affect your speech and we each will reap what we sow.

Jesus always made every word, every sentence, and every opportunity *COUNT* for the Father! What He said was helpful even if it didn't initially feel like it. In John six, we see the Lord of lords preaching as an authoritative Oracle of God. This was His, "***I am the bread of life***" Message and people really listened up (see verse 35). It was much different than when the religious leaders spoke. What this Revolutionary said was impacting and radically controversial. Many of His fair-weather followers ended up bailing out on Him that day. They simply quit following Jesus after hearing His communication and it was because Christ wasn't out to win a popularity contest or out to gain a huge applauding crowd. He wasn't in it to tickle ears, or even to please people primarily. He was a crowd-thinner for sure when his lips were moving, but He didn't deceive or exaggerate. He wasn't offensive for being offensives' sake. The truth He spoke offended some sinners and for others—it set them free! That's what happened to me as well. But Jesus knows what people really need to hear more than they know what they need to hear. In fact, He'll speak to you about what you need, if you are open to it.

But those followers of His that day just split and walked away from God, not wanting to follow Him anymore (v.66). They chose to stop listening to the voice of the Lord. How tragic! Do you long to hear what He would say? When Jesus challenged His closest disciples as to whether they would also bail out, Pete wisely spoke up saying, "***Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.***"

How important are the words we choose and the sentences we utter? Well, there are very few tools in a person's repertoire of skills which have the potential to be more powerful (for good or for hurt) than the skill of communication. The ideas you think, the attitudes you feel, the words you choose to voice and the way you choose to express all of that, often determines the success or failure of your daily interactions. It's sobering!

According to research psychologists that have looked into this, the average one-year-old child has a three-word vocabulary. By fifteen months of age, children can then speak nineteen words. At two, most youngsters will possess a working knowledge of 272 words. Their vocabularies then jump up to 896 words by the age of three, and to 1,540 words by the age four, and to 2,072 words by the age of five. By age six the average child can communicate with 2,562 words.

Although our accumulation of words continues to grow throughout life—or should as we apply ourselves—effective use of those words does not necessarily follow with God's wisdom in every situation. Though the average adult will speak approximately 18,000 words per day, this does not mean their verbal messages are being clearly relayed or are even helpful for other people. "*Words, like glasses,*" wrote Joseph Joubert, "*obscure everything which they do not make clear.*"

So should we be "brutally honest" with one another? One of the best definitions of good communication that I've ever heard is found in Ephesians 4:15 which strongly encourages us Christians to always "**speak the truth in love.**" There's a tall mountain of truth packed into that little phrase. It's not enough just to speak the truth. Truth without love can wound people. I guess that's why it's called being "*brutally honest*" when charity is missing.

When you speak the truth without love, you could actually be too harsh too often or be insensitive, and even be alienating. You could be building walls relationally, when wisdom says build a bridge. On the other hand, when you lie just to spare someone's feelings, you undermine your own credibility and destroy your effectiveness as a communicator. No, these two elements, truth and love, must both be present in your communication if you're going to be the soul-winning communicator that God wants you to be. Jesus exemplified the beautiful balance.

Author, Neil Postman, once wrote a book called, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. It warned people of the danger of a world overrun with too much worthless information. He spoke of a chilling futuristic scenario—Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*... which describes a crazy society that gets thoroughly flooded and glutted with T.M.I. (too much information)... because so many people simply want to be heard and to be paid attention to. Some people are motivated to gain more money, some want to gain a pure form of human love. But all that data often gets manipulated for different purposes to the point that most of it has no significance. Why are we so easily distracted away from Him? Why is it so hard to keep the Main thing the main thing? Why do we so often major on the minors... and minor on the majors in life?

Taking a glance at the Internet, at the bookstore shelves (filled with New Age and humanism propaganda), at the music stores (promoting pleasure at any price), or at magazine racks—it all lets us know that we are living in just such a culture gone astray. People are drowning in a sea of news (decent or biased) and information often marketed by the hyper-cunning and unscrupulous.

Should we add to it and fill up the air with wasted words? No! Should we communicate wisely? Yes! Who should we listen to today and how can we avoid get sucked into a wasted-words-type-of-soup ourselves?

Listen, if you want to be effective, listen to Jesus Christ, and communicate as He would have you communicate. His Spirit can live big on the inside of you, if you will let Him in. Please don't waste your breath or have wrong motives!

Jesus said, "**A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned**" (Matt. 12:35-37, kjv).

*Lord, guard our tongues so what we say won't hurt and carelessly offend;  
Give us the gracious speech of love, with words that soothe and heal and mend. —Sper*

We are living in perilous times which are getting more and more perplexing. We all need discernment like never before. Our families and churches need us to be discerning. What some pastors, Christians and Christian bands are exporting this decade reminds me of some verse in a song by Glen Kaiser:

***Child, you don't say much  
Maybe ain't got much to say  
You sing about boys and girls  
Seem to like bein' up on the stage  
Perhaps just a little too young  
Maybe just a bit afraid  
Or maybe it's a case of fantasy thrill  
Maybe just wanna get paid  
But ya don't say much***

***Words are important to you  
You like to hold tight to the truth  
But fun means more sometimes  
It's an interesting habit I find  
From the mouth we reveal our heart  
And singin' ain't only an art  
We need to think about the things we say  
Life isn't only for play  
Some folks are so out of touch  
Because you don't say much  
But ya sure like to play guitar...***

***Heaven, hell, or this earth  
There's somethin' 'bout value and worth  
Actions speak louder than words  
But hidin' God's truth is absurd***

Yes, those are some of the pithy lyrics from one of my favorite artists from his: *"Time Will Tell"* album. I've never heard him waste words. He's gutsy and direct. And the first time I heard them, those words stuck in my mind. He passionately addresses messengers and their motives. He humbly appeals to all who would utilize words productively. Maybe like me, you've encountered some Christian concerts where the artists seem to be doing their best to cross over to maybe *"make it big in the world,"* but are failing to take the cross over. It reminds me of what Pete admonished us, ***"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth"*** (1 Pet. 4:11).

Hey gang; let's be careful to build up and to influence others in a positive way for Christ without lowering our standards! Let's never speak great swelling words of vanity, alluring people through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness! We are citizens of another world, so why do we need to make it big in this one? Let's say much in truth and in love, but only when the time and inner motives are right.