

Quick to Hear and Slow to Speak

James 1:19

June 28, 2020, Quentin Smith

I want to welcome everybody here tonight. I have missed church. I have missed seeing you on a regular basis and for those of us who are here, it is just great to see you all; and for those of you who are joining us via our Grace Fellowship YouTube channel, I want to welcome you as well on what is for you Sunday morning. I feel like I need to pray. We're talking about speech, and I think I need to pray. Why don't you join me?

Father, I just want to come before you tonight. Lord, we err so much with our mouths. We understand that it's the mouth that speaks from the overflow of the heart, and so we stand challenged, convicted, guilty, so many times because we fail in this area. Father, we desire to do better, and I pray that You would help us to understand that You have created us. You have placed us in a low position. We are servants of Christ, slaves of Christ; and I pray that that would feed into how we treat and deal with one another.

Father, I pray for tonight. I pray that You would give us a really clear understanding of what Your scriptures say. And we want to thank You for the grace that we live in. The fact that we can repent when we fail You. Be with us now Lord, help us to grow from being here tonight. We ask this in Christ's name, amen.

This month in our backyard, we witnessed the implosion of a business. In Vancouver, a company called Vancouver Candle Company, a \$4.6 million annually large company may not survive. Merchants, vendors have decided to pull their products from the shelves. They've taken inventory off the websites. People who have bought those candles have threatened to trash them. There's been this massive outcry against the company from the community. Something that I'm told is, is called the "cancel culture." The community has effectively canceled Vancouver Candle Company. They've boycotted it with this backlash. It's unlikely to survive, and I'm sure that the owners put a lot of thought into the design and the build of that company over years. And it's come tumbling down within a matter of days. What happened?

Words, words happened. There were texts and Instagram posts that showed incredibly mean and hateful and racist speech. There was threatening speech. There was inflammatory speech. There was speech that came from a heart that that revealed all of that hatred and a heart that thought it was smug enough and arrogant enough to actually say that this man could actually treat other people the way he did. That he could say those things to another human being. The words simply revealed what were already in the heart; and now the destructive power of all of those words is being felt very personally as he's had to resign from a company that he built.

We're in the middle of a mini-series on communication. A series called *Taming the Tongue*; and you know what, it's such an important topic to talk about because we all battle with that. We all desire to do better, and before we get too smug and judgmental, I just want to remind us that we've all been in that situation where we really, really wish that we could rewind 30 seconds. Where we really, really wish that we could do better, and that we could take back what just slipped out. Moments where we reacted too quickly. We were impulsive, and then we had great regret that we had done that because now we had to clean up the mess. And that's because words have effects. Words are influential. Words have power.

In James chapter 1:19-20 it's helpful for us in our communication, and it's a verse that I often share with counselors because it's so true and it runs so deep. And it was on my heart to share with you, but I realized that just as no communication, no conversation with people happens in a vacuum, there's always context to what's happening. So too, this verse of 19 and verse 20, they sit within a context of chapter one. And we talked about that last week because the context of any communication that you have, any conversation that you have is your heart. What's going on in your heart is going to be revealed and what comes out of your mouth. It's just that way.

Matthew 12:34 says, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." The dissatisfied heart will communicate with grumbling. The self-focused heart is going to communicate about me. And when you put those together, the self-focused and the grumbling heart, you're going to have grumbling about how bad it is for me. The fearful heart will express anxious words, words that hesitate to trust; but the humble and the trusting and the authentic heart is going to communicate that in just the same way. Turn with me briefly just to Acts 4:13. Let me read this to you.

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

That's an unusual verse for me to take you to, but it's a verse that's all about communication. And I love that verse because it's all about what Peter and John communicated. What did they communicate? They communicated confidence in what they said and what they did. And where did that confidence come? The religious leaders saw and realized that they had been with Jesus. They had been changed at the level of the heart, and that's what the religious leaders saw. They saw an uncommon confidence communicated in speech and action.

If we want our communication to be better, if we want to be more like Christ, we need to be with Jesus more. He the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God must influence and change us at the heart level, so that we communicate more like Christ. See, religion tries to change behavior, "Say

it like this, do it like this;” but Jesus goes after the heart. And once the heart is saved, once the hardest is converted, whatever flows from that will be good.

So, last week we spent a great deal of time talking about the heart attitudes, attitudes like humility. Acknowledging that we're slaves of Christ; it's very hard to talk down to somebody if you understand that you're a slave of Christ. Number two, insight. We talked about having insight into God's sovereignty, so that that knowledge of God's sovereignty is going to guide you in whatever situation you are in, knowing that it's not an accident. God has brought that, and He's brought it for your learning and His glory. And so, you're going to find yourself in that situation where you can have that peace the passes understanding, and you're going to communicate that peace. Stability was the third point. Not tossed to and fro, recognizing that there's nowhere else to go, asking God for wisdom. Knowing that Jesus has the words of eternal life, where else would we go? Number four, perspective that all is temporary around us; and let that feed into what you treasure because whatever's here is not lasting. And so, let it define what you defend, what you're prepared to defend. Does it matter? Is it temporary? Is it worldly? Or does it have eternal consequences?

Number five, honesty, and honesty to know that sin originates here when you're tempted to blame shift, right? An honesty that I'm no better than the person next to me who may have just different struggles than I have. Number six, an understanding of how we are loved by God, that we are blessed, that it was an intentional move on God's part to save us. And that no man or woman or child made in God's image should be thought of as inferior or somehow human trash. Number seven, determination; the determination to put off sin and to put on the humility to receive that word of God that is implanted and has the power, the *dunamis*, to save you. And finally, understanding all of that, the final heart condition was genuineness, authenticity; being the genuine article.

You know, there was a T shirt that was floating around years ago, many of you will remember this when I say this, but it said, “Before operating mouth, engage brain.” You remember that one? You know the Bible would say, “Before operating mouth, pause and engage your heart.” If you haven't listened to last week, I would encourage you to do so because it does form an integral part of the context of the series. But today, it brings us to a text today; and I want to talk about James chapter one and part of verse nineteen.

It's a two-point sermon with some sub points; but if you're taking notes, I want to talk about number one, quick to hear, and number two, slow to speak. Let's just read this first part of James chapter 1:19.

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.

Well, the first point I want to make is that James is talking to Christians, and he affectionately calls them beloved brethren. That's really encouraging because just because we're saved, doesn't mean we don't struggle. Just because we've been redeemed and our future is so bright in glory, doesn't mean that we don't live here now. We're already citizens of heaven, but we're still sojourning on the earth. We have great hope, but this is actually our current reality, and so what that means is we don't have to pretend with one another. We don't have to pretend that we're somehow masters of this thing. We are learners. We ought to display that "L" in humility for learner or that "D" in humility for disciple, right? A learning follower. And we especially don't have to pretend with God.

Your version might say "This, you know," but another rendition of this might say, "know this my beloved brethren." We talked about how that applies to all the other eighteen verses that preceded this. Remember this.

He goes on to say everyone must be quick to hear. "Everyone", there are no exceptions to that word, "Everyone must be", command imperative, "quick to hear." What does that mean, "Quick to hear"? You know, what it means is effectual listening. It means that you actually hear when you listen, and it makes a difference.

See, there's a difference between listening and hearing. You have to listen in order to hear, but you might not hear even though you're listening. Listening is active. You listen usually with the intention of hearing, but you can listen and not hear. And that's the point. There's a principle here of half listening. You may not truly get what he said. There are 323 references in the Bible to listening, but if you take the word "hear" in all of its different forms, there are 856 times – three times more about hearing than listening. And we understand that, we understand the emphasis of the Bible is to listen and actually hear, so it makes a difference. We get that. We understand that the emphasis on actually hearing because when we pray by faith, we want to know that God actually listens and hears and responds, don't we? David certainly did.

Psalm 27:7:

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice.

His expectation was that God would resonate with his anguish and He would respond.

Psalm 30:10:

Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me.

Psalm 61:1:

Hear my cry, Oh God; and give heed to my prayer.

I can just imagine that David, when he writes that, is not in some sort of academic class. His heart is crying out to God, trusting that the Father whom he knows, listens, hears, and understands.

But it's the other way around as well. God expects us not only to listen but to hear and respond as well. Deuteronomy 5:1:

Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I'm speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully."

Deuteronomy 6:4:

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is One! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

You hear, and you respond. Then of course, you've got Matthew seven, starting in verse 24 where Jesus says this,

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell – and great was its fall.

Well, how is this gonna play out? How is quick to hear, really hear, actually hear, how is that gonna play out in our lives? Well the first sub point under quick to hear is in your relationship with God. I'm going to ask us, are we teachable? Our relationship with God, are we teachable?

As we were going through the Old Testament, we came to Jeremiah and Jeremiah chapter 10:23 is one of my favorite verses. It says this,

I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

If we're going to talk about being teachable, we're talking about the attitude of humility of heart to know that we don't know the way. That's what Jeremiah is saying, it's not within man who walks to direct his own steps. We do not come programmed to know how to live. That's why we have the word of God. That's why we have the grace of God that has given us that word.

Honestly, as you sit there, you know that we don't know the way. Left to our own devices, we are a wreck. Think about what your lives were like before you were saved. We were a disaster. Think about the way things go when you stray from the Word of God. Many of our lives were a wreck. But God. We were going our own way, our tail was up, we were struggling through life, the prodigal son was like that. And you know how that ended for him, right? Down the track of a wasted life, but by God's grace, in the parable he saw, understood, stopped in his tracks and came home. Tail between his legs. Not strutting but slinking. Humbled, finally teachable.

Here's the challenge for us. Are we actually hearing God? When you open up your Bible and you start reading, are you hearing? J. A. Mptyer in his message of James says this, "It is possible to be unfailingly regular in Bible reading, but to achieve no more than to have moved the bookmark forward: this is reading unrelated to an attentive spirit. The word is read, but not heard." When we open our Bibles, are we just moving the bookmark forward? Closing it up and saying, "At least that's over for the day." I mean, how many of us have not had that experience? I think we all have when at the end of our reading time and not really having connected with the Word of God, not really having connected with God, "I feel so dry." We've been listening in the sense that we were actually reading, but it just seems like we missed the mark.

So, there are times when it's good to do a survey. Times when you just read tons of narrative, but there are other times where we just really need to stop. We need to connect with the Word of God, and we need to read between the lines and ask ourselves, "What is God saying to me today? What does this passage mean? What does it mean to the people that was written to?" Take the time to connect. "Did I pray before I started reading? Was I distracted by my phone?" Relationship with God, are you teachable?

Point number two under quick to hear. What about our relationship with people? Are we teachable there? Are we considerate? Are we others focused? Are we actually interested? When we have conversation, are we actually genuine? Simply put, ask yourself the question, "Am I connecting with people? Do I hear them? When was the last time I asked somebody how they were doing? Do I ask sincere questions about the other person to show that I'm genuinely interested or is conversation for me more of an opportunity to tell others about me? Do I listen attentively to the response so that I can respond thoughtfully?"

Men. I'm going to talk about us for a little bit. We are we are very good at half listening. Our wives will be talking, and we are apparently listening, but our mind might be elsewhere. So I've

been told. We've become so good at tuning in and out, so that we follow the gist of the conversation, we stay out of trouble, but we're not actually truly dialed in. And sometimes we get so good that we can actually nod half-way through so that that gives the appearance. It's an appropriate nod to bolster the impression that we're actually there. Then there's that awful time when our wives look at us, and they are expecting a response from all that's been said; and we realized that we have no idea what she just asked us. And then we're like deer in the headlights, busted.

Ladies, are you desperate to have your word and influence over your husband's so that you are more prone to talk and make sure he gets it? Are you impatient and interrupting? Is there some subtle control or coaching going on there?

Parents, are you available to your children? I remember Lorenzo was very small and Tanya had the busy mother syndrome; and he would be wanting to talk with her so he would pull on her clothing. He would reach up and grab her face and move it like this, so that he could talk with her because he wanted to make sure that she heard. How old was he? Three or five, something like that, small; but he got it. He recognized that need to "Hey, Mom, you need to listen to me."

What about young people? Are you aware and sensitive to your immediate environment? There is a there is a trend amongst young people to get plugged in and zoned out, is that you?

How about this? How well do we take direction, or do I go into every conversation as the authority? What about criticism? Can we hear criticism? Do we listen all the way through when it's pointed out that we didn't do so well? You know, God has given us multiple people in our lives, our husbands, our wives, our brothers and sisters, our clients, our children, and what are we doing when these people come back with us with feedback that isn't flattering? Am I able to listen all the way through? Do I get it or do I cut them off? Do I listen first and think about it and weigh it up and evaluate it? Do I ask myself the question, "This is obviously something that this person sees, is it true? Is this something that I need to repent of? Is this hurting the cause or the body of Christ? Have I hurt a brother or sister ever dishonored God with what I said or did?" It's really difficult to take criticism. We're proud people, and I'm standing here before you knowing that I am probably the worst at taking criticism. If you're a perfectionist, it is extremely hard for you.

Do I value this person? "Sorry, I just need to take this." You're sitting with your phone on the table and it goes "Bzzz" and you're looking and you get that little glance to see who texted you. What did we just say? What did we just say to that person? We said, "Hang on a second, you're important, but you're not as important as this." This person takes priority. You know, Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices." And I know that's out of context, but I couldn't resist.

Think about the irony of that. A communications device that has made our communication worse one on one. More distracted, more not there. That's quite indicting, but praise God that although it's not flattering to look inside, is it? There's an encouragement that James has, we have opportunity to change. We can fix this. We can become quick to hear. We're disciples we're learners. Let's display that "L", let's not be afraid to do that. His mercies are new every morning, and this is a command that is going to help us so much.

So, point number one, "But everyone must be quick to hear."

Point number two, slow to speak. This word in the Greek is *bradys*. And the doctors who are watching this will be interested to know that that's where we get the word bradycardia, slow pulse, it means slow. *Brady*s. The fact is, we cannot listen and talk at the same time. I don't care if you think that that's your spiritual gift. You can't do it. I'm telling you now you can't talk and listen at the same time. If you are listening so that you hear, and you absorb what is said, it's almost impossible to not be slow to speak. So be careful if you are too quick to respond, it might just be a dead giveaway that you weren't actually quick to hear. You get that? If you're too quick to respond, it might come across that you've been crafting your answer and not listening; so that as soon as that person draws a breath, you come crashing in with an answer.

You know, when I'm dealing with folks who are having difficulty with communication, there's a task that I get them to do. I say, "I want you to get a window marker and I want you to write on the mirror in the bathroom two words – 'react' and "respond'. Then I want you to take that window marker, and I want you to put a big cross through 'react' because you see when we react, it's something quick; but when we respond, that's different. That's a bit slower. That's something that is more thoughtful."

Proverbs chapter 15:28 says, "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer." I love that. I love that; it's so interesting to me that the righteous heart is the source of a careful answer. The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer. It says though, we need to be hesitant to speak so why ought we to be hesitant to speak? I've got six points. Six sub points under slow to speak

Number one, words reveal our heart. Matthew 15:18:

But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and slanders.

Matthew 12:34:

You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.

And finally, Proverbs 17:27:

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

Now you want to be careful here. You want to be careful that we don't just camouflage what's really going on in our hearts by not saying anything because that's possible. That's what's happening with the fool. The fool is still a fool even though he doesn't speak. There's no change at the heart level. And so just by keeping quiet, it doesn't mean you've fulfilled the Bible's mandate. No, the Bible's mandate is a heart change; but you see, we're all in process. Jesus comes in. The Holy Spirit tells us we're on a road to sanctification, heart change, but along the way, unfortunately, we open up our mouth. So, the emphasis is not to do too much damage while we're learning. We want to be doing that heart change. We don't want to just be quiet and carry on and fly under the radar and just not reveal what's in our hearts. That's not what the Bible is teaching. But why we restrain our words, is that in the meantime, while we're clumsy with this, we don't do too much damage. While we're learning to do better in a genuine way with what's actually in the heart, here's what's happening. Here's the process when we take the time to take a thought captive, and repent of it before it overflows from the heart, then we can actually change what's inside here before it hits the lips and does the damage that we have to clean up.

We control that impulse at the heart level, repent of it, put it off, and put on how we ought to think. If you react, there's no time for that process to happen. There's no time for the pondering to take place. That's why we need to be slow to speak so we can actually work at what is going on in our hearts. If we react rather than respond, we risk bringing dishonour to Christ because we betray a heart that is not very sanctified. A heart that is immature.

Number two, we will be judged by our words. Matthew 12:36 says this,

But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned.

I don't think many of us realize that what we say will bring judgment on us. That's because our words reveal our heart condition; our words which ought to display our salvation because by now we know that they come from the heart. I think I mentioned that, but Jesus references every careless word. He says, "I tell you that every *careless* word that people speak, they will give an accounting for." That word carries with it the idea of thoughtlessness, doesn't it? Not thinking, speaking too quickly. Proverbs 18:13 says,

He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.

Proverbs 26:4:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes.

Now, if you're going to answer a fool according to his folly, that's going to take some thought. That's going to be a measured response. "Answer a fool as fully deserves."

The word "careless" can also be translated as useless and that's the person who blabbers on. That's the person who speaks too easily. He speaks to fill space. He talks for the sake of it and because of that, there are a lot of words. Notice that I used the pronoun "he" just in case there was any stereotyping. Too many words. It's what I said last time, Plato said, "Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools have to say something."

So the challenge for you this week is if you had a budget for words, you know, we all hate budgets. You know that? You try to talk about a budget, they don't like budgets. Why don't we like budgets? Talking finances? Why don't we like budgets? You know why? Because they're restraining. They put borders and self-control around money, and we don't like that. We don't like to have borders and self-control, but I'm going to say this. This week here's your challenge. I'm going to ask you to pretend you have a budget of words. If you could only say a certain number of words in a day, what words you're going to choose? I think we're going to choose words that are kind, words that edify. To put it a different way, if you had to buy your words, what words would you buy? Would you be wasteful with that? Not a chance. You work too hard for your money. You're going to buy quality.

So, number one, words reveal our heart. Number two, we will be judged by our words; so let's be careful. Let's think about a budget and if we had to pay for them. Number three, words are influential.

We all have influence. You may think you don't have influence but I'm telling you, you do. You absolutely do by very nature that influence that you have is either good or bad, and you get to

choose whether it's good or bad. Our influence is mainly experienced through words and actions. Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 and he says this,

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself [to be] an example to those who believe.

There it is. In speech and conduct, words and actions, you be an example. There's your influence Timothy, a powerful example, powerful influence, powerful encouragement. But, you will know that with any influence, comes tremendous responsibility. If you're a person of high influence, you need to be really careful because people are watching how you live. You may impact people without even knowing.

If you're a parent, you have multiple pairs of little eyes that do not miss a beat. As a parent, you have significant influence. They see and hear how you speak in the privacy of your home about people in the church, and then they see how you speak to them on the phone or at church. Ouch. They see the mismatch of your words and your actions; they see how there's a standard for them and a standard for you, and then we wonder why they're not drawn to Christianity. If you turn over with me to chapter three here, James chapter three; we're just going to read verse one.

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Words are influential, so take care with your influence. As a teacher there'll be a stricter judgment. In case you think that that doesn't apply to you, you may not be a teacher in the church, but you are a teacher of somebody. We all teach somebody, and therefore your words are influential.

Number four, words are powerful. Let's continue in chapter three verse two,

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

The tongue is very small, but it's very powerful. James knows that the horse is a powerful beast; he knows that a bit is a small item. You put the small item in the mouth of this powerful beast, and you transfer power from the bit to the rider, and the rider can now control this entire beast with something that is this size. The same with the rudder of a ship; small item, small part,

massive implications for a large ship. And likewise, the tongue is a very small part of the body. Yet it boasts of great things and its power goes far beyond it. The past power of the tongue is out of proportion to its size is James' point.

And because of that, point number five, words are dangerous; or they can be. Pick it up halfway through verse five,

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

We understand fires here in B.C. And we have plenty of friends in California who've just been through tremendous wildfires, fires that are frightening. Fires that consume things in their way to the point that it becomes very real to understand that our God is a consuming fire. But those fires that are that are raging over multiple hundreds of hectares didn't start that way. They started off as a spark a little lick of flame, a tiny little ember.

I wonder if you've ever thought about this. If you want to own a gun, there are all kinds of regulations around that. There has to be a gun safe for storage, there's this certification that you've done a safety course, there's a background check, there are restrictions on how you carry them. And most of that is because as useful as a gun might be, they can be deadly and have been on innumerable occasions. Or if you own a car or a motorcycle, same thing; you can kill people, you can kill yourself. But words and the heart that they reveal can destroy whole families and you know what? You don't need a license for that.

Think about it. Divorces murder, online bullying leading to suicides, whole families destroyed, relationships, friendships, churches, words can start riots. Wars. We are seeing that in the States. It can destroy businesses as I started off my sermon with. Careers. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, because words carry messages and they display attitudes of the heart; and they provoke responses to that. So, they can be really dangerous, but they start really small like a spark.

James says they come from hearts that are supposed to love God, and James says that that's not normal. That's a freak. That's a monster. It's a sign of something that's incredibly wrong. A fountain cannot send both fresh water and bitter water. A fig tree cannot produce olives. The source cannot produce something that the source is not meant to produce. And the convicting thing is that if you struggle with communication, we have to look at our hearts because something is not right.

Finally, number six, words are helpful. Just to review what we've said; we're talking about slow to speak because words reveal our heart. Number two, we will be judged by our words. Number three, words are influential. Number four, words are powerful. Number five, words are dangerous; but you know, words can be a good thing. They can be helpful, number six. As dangerous as they can be, they can also be equally healing and helpful. Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

You want to know how to respond to each person? Respond with grace. It's what that verse says. "But you don't know what my wife is like." Respond with grace. "You don't know what my husband said to me." Respond with grace. "My parents are so bad at being parents." Respond with grace. That way you see you will season, and you'll make better and you'll preserve just like salt does. Ephesians 4:29-30 says,

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

"Let no unknown wholesome word," nothing rotten come out, nada, nothing. Don't let anything rotten proceed from your mouth, "but only such a word as is good for edification." That means only, exclusively. "According to the need of the moment," that means timely, sensitive, thoughtfully so that it will give grace, healing, restoring, affirming love to those who hear directed to the right place. See words can heal. Words are a medium that can be so restoring. "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Why would the Holy Spirit be grieved? Well, because the Holy Spirit dwells within us and when our speech is not edifying, when something rotten comes from our heart, He winces because He's just been misrepresented. The Holy Spirit lives inside, but something else came out. That's the freak of nature. That's the monster. That isn't the right thing. And so, He winces; He is dishonored. He is grieved in just the same way as you as a parent would be grieved and dishonored and disappointed and let down if your child steals something from the store, because you know that that's going to represent you. You're not going to look good. You are grieved.

So, we don't need to be scared to use words. We just need to be genuine. We just need to taste those words and recognize that if we are genuine, we're not going to be caught out. And you know what? If the phone wasn't hung up properly, and you're talking to your wife, you're not at risk of being heard because you're not going to be talking about other people. There isn't the risk of being caught out if you're authentic.

A final thought perhaps is that God chose words. They can't all be bad. He chose words to create. In the beginning He said, "Let there be light" and there was. He used words to communicate with us. The Word of God is what edifies and builds up and changes; so don't be scared, just be genuine.

So, as we wrap up, I want to ask you the question. Are you struggling with your speech? Do you feel clumsy in your communication? Well firstly, look at your heart. Then decide to be quick to hear, really hear. Hear from God; hear from others. And determine to be slow to speak. Decide to be. Don't react; ponder and then respond. Recognize the power and the influence of words for good and evil; be sober minded about that.

It's not going to happen though, without stopping long enough to be with Jesus. It's not going to happen without the influence of the Word of God, without you asking God to help you to be more intentional with your heart, and therefore, your speech. The rulers and the elders and the scribes in Acts four recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus. Let me ask you, have you been with Jesus? Have you been enough with Jesus? It's always a struggle for us, isn't it? The spiritual disciplines of being in the Word of God and prayer; and if you haven't, I would encourage you to.

If you're not a believer today and you're listening to the sermon, I would really encourage you that Jesus will judge us for our sin. The words that we say betray what's happening in the heart, but He's ready and willing to grant you the forgiveness and to forgive you your sin. If you're sincerely broken over that sin, we call that repentance. And He's provided a way that you can be saved. He wants to restore that relationship that you broke when you decided to move away from Him. To do your own thing. He wants to give us new hearts; and if He gives us new hearts, I know that we are going to do better when we communicate with one another. Let me pray for us.

Father, we're thankful for this passage. We're thankful for the encouragement that we have now to be quick to hear and slow to speak. Lord I want to pray that You would work upon each of our hearts. That You would help us to be humble enough to confess that we don't do this well. But Father we know that we can do better, we know that You are at work in our hearts. You've declared us to be righteous. We're growing into that which You have declared us to be. And while we're in process, Lord, I pray that You'd help us not to bring dishonor to Your name by the

things that come out of our mouths. Help us to love one another. Help us to choose our words carefully. Help us to not be afraid. Help us to rely on repentance when we mess up; when we have to clean up the mess from speaking too quickly, by reacting and not responding.

I pray Lord, that You would liberate us, and help us to truly find joy in the freedom in Christ. That we are just vessels and that You will continue and perfect and bring us to maturity because You love us. Father, thank You for this time in Your word. May You multiply what we've said here today, and work in every person's heart in Jesus name, amen.

Well, I want to thank you for being with us on our YouTube channel. For those of you who are here tonight, I'm glad you could come. If you would like to know more about our ministry, feel free to go to the internet and check us out on gracefellowshipchilliwack.com but until next week. God bless and have a wonderful week.