

The Bride A Speaking Community

Last week we turned a corner in our series and changed the focus from what the church is to what the church does. Last week we said that the church worships and we constructed a theology of worship—revelation and joy/hopeful response. This week we're going to talk about a second main category and that is community. The church grows together as a family. And my approach is going to be a little bit different than last week. We've developed a pretty solid framework for community. We've said that our unity is created by common life-stage or interests, or even that we like one another. We've talked about the body and the importance of being connected in order to grow—was reminded of how important small groups are. We've talked about covenant commitment to one another in membership (stand if you just got into membership). So we've hit community pretty hard. And so today I want to talk about community but not directly. I want to talk about something that has the potential to either foster community or destroy community. Something that has the power to enhance and grow and develop your family, relationships, and your church and something that has the capability of doing serious damage to all three. And that something is words. We are a speaking community. Other animals certainly communicate, but only humans use words. And we use them a lot.

In 2013 *The Scientific American* published an article called *Gender Jabber: Do Women Talk More Than Men?* It was conducted by James Pennebaker, chair of The University of Texas at Austin's Psychology department. And he rounded up 396 college students (210 women 186 men) from Texas Arizona and Mexico and equipped them with an electronically activated recorder. 16,215 for women 15,669. For the kind of study they did, that is virtually identical. He concluded, "Women tend to jaw more about other people, whereas men are apt to hold forth on more concrete objects."

16,000 words a day. That's a lot of words. And when you read the Bible you realize very quickly that God cares an enormous amount about our words and is wants us to be extremely aware of their potential either for good or for bad. Proverbs probably has the most about words... **Prov. 18:21** "Death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it shall it of its fruits.

- Words have the power to take and give life. (Prov. 18:21)

16,000 opportunities to either take life or give it.

- **Prov. 12:18** There's no one here who can't think back to something someone said about them years ago. A Coach told my friend, "You are a cancer to society."
- **Prov. 16:24**—Mark Twain, "I can last two months on a good compliment" Kirk Whalum, "I can't wait to here you play". People in this church have encouraged me! Thank you! Words have incredible potential to help and to hurt this church.

And so we can never underestimate the impact of our words. And when I say that it can comes across like "if you can't say something nice don't say anything at all" but there are huge heart level theological elements in play here. The Bible speaks with nearly disturbing clarity on the significance of words, **"If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."** **Js. 1:26** If you claim the name of Jesus and the way you talk to people and about people isn't righteous and honoring to Him, Bible says you're Christianity is worthless. What you post on Facebook tells the world something about the legitimacy of your faith.

Matt. 12:36-37. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” **Why is that?**

- Our words _____ reveal _____ what’s in our hearts. (Lk. 6:45)

Lk. 6:45, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” The words that come out of your mouth, reveal the truth about what’s in your heart. Not a potty mouth but a potty heart. And so as we take a look at our words today, we’re going to be very intentional about pointing out what those words say about our heart and then show how the Gospel the identity we have in Christ allows us to use our words in a way that gives life. **Pray.**

Words Take Life When...

□ They are used to _____ distort _____ the truth. (Prov. 12:22, Jn. 8:44)

We call this lying. God hates lying, bc he’s the embodiment of truth. And in Jn. 8:44 we read that Satan “When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” So don’t miss this, you’re never more like Satan than when you’re lying!!! (Rev. 21:8)—God throws lying in there!

Are you someone who lies? I don’t want to address bold face lies as much as I want to address a much more acceptable form of lying—truth bending. Truth benders say things that have kernels of truth in them, but their presentation of the facts is misleading. And this happens all the time.

We bend the truth when we exaggerate

The buck you shot was not 1000 pounds. Also, I see this one a lot of times in relationships. And it happens in an argument and one party is trying to make their case. You always do this. You always say that. And we say these things not bc they’re true bc they allow us to express how we feel—it’s therapeutic. “You never take out the trash.” It but when you say things like always and never, you rob them of every time they got it right. says, “You’re only as good as your most recent failure.” Distorting the truth to produce behavioral change is not pleasing to God even if it might be convenient for you.

We bend the truth when we only present part of it.

Acts 5:1-5. He presented the part as if it was the whole. So and so did this to me and then asked for forgiveness and I’ve told people about it and left out the part about asking for forgiveness.

Now we have to get to the heart of this. It’s not enough to simply say “Don’t lie”. Why do we lie? Why do we feel the tendency to lie?

- Mistaken Belief: My hope is in my reputation and _____ circumstances _____.

You know why lying is so attractive? Lying offers to give you something the truth won’t. Lying offers to preserve or enhance our reputation and circumstances. Lying says, “You can exercise a lot of control about what people think about you if you just bend the truth...and you can’t afford for people to not approve of you, so do it.” A little exaggeration can take you from good to great. Buck is bigger, marriage is better etc. And the fact is that if your identity is bound up in other’s praise and approval you will distort the truth and you will lie but there’s another way. But here’s where the Gospel comes in, what we learn “ **But with me it**

is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.” 1 Cor. 4:3-4. When I’m hoping in God and I measure myself by his love for me, I free from feeling like I need to constantly try and manage other people’s thoughts about me. And I can tell the truth about myself and about others. You can be honest about the fact there are people who could do your job better, who are nicer than you, wiser than you, smarter than you, who would be more patient or loving with your spouse than you are. The Gospel gives you the power to tell the world your biggest secret, that you’re really not that special, and Someone Else is. The antidote to distorting the truth is knowing the truth about who God says you are and allowing that to define you. And until you accept this, you will constantly feel a pull to use your words to distort the truth to give yourself boost and control others’ opinions of you. Words take life when they distort the truth.

- They are used to _____ inflict _____ pain. (Prov. 12:18) (Prov. 12:18). This usually happens in response to what someone says or does. One of our favorite things to do when someone hurts us to make sure we hurt them back. And we’ve learned that the most effective way to get people back is to take emotional revenge by piercing them with our words.

Maybe we just make snide little sarcastic comments... Maybe we bring up what they did again... maybe we compare them to someone else who is better and make them feel like they’re not good enough... Dave Harvey... “You’ve been there. Your spouse says something whether intentional or not and it’s like a stomach punch to the soul. You feel assaulted, rejected, embarrassed. Immediately a counterattack strategy begins to form in you remind... You want to load your mouth and pull the trigger. You want to call in a round of devastating insights that decimate your spouse’s claim like a well-targeted air assault. You want to unleash a verbal strike force that will take back every inch of lost ground and extract payment for every twinge of wounded pride. You want to leave meekness in a box back at the base and just to get war.”

We’ll do what it takes to make them feel hurt or shame. People say “It’s my fault if they feel bad as long as what I said was true.”

Well Chase, sometimes you just have to speak the truth... **Ephesians 4:15** says, “Speak the truth in love” o

The truth must always be spoken in ____love____. (Eph. 4:15)

- “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” (Eph. 4:29)

And I see a lot of people only take the first three words of that to heart. They walk around dispensing their “truth” to everyone. They’re just the people who “call it like they see it” and they can never understand why people get so bent out of shape when all you’re doing is telling the truth. I used to do this... I used to think that as long as what I said was true I had a right to say it and if anyone got offended it was their fault. But the Bible says to speak the truth in “love”. What does that mean... (Eph. 4:29) Is this your goal when you’re in conflict with someone? Because so often times, I think our aim is not to understand the other person or to build them up, our goal is either to win or to make them feel a sense of shame. “Being harsh gets results”. **Prov 25:15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.** Keller “If you truly care about the truth, you will want people to believe it. Say it, then, in a way that makes it as hearable as possible. Words take craftsmanship. You need truthful words. You need kind and gentle words. And you need apt, appropriate, beautiful words.”

What’s happening is not ultimately a problem with our words, but with our heart. Something has become more valuable than God and it’s producing bad fruit... And here’s what’s going on in that moment.

- Heart Problem: The pleasure of making you ____hurt____ is sweeter than giving the grace that shows you ____Christ_____.

I know Christ died to take away your shame. But I'm going to make you feel it. And until we're overwhelmed with the shame that Christ has taken away. Some people don't know this, but Christ died not just to save you, but to take away your shame. (Isa. 61:10). Christ taking your shame frees you from making other people feel theirs. (Isa. 61:10) **HOOOOME!**

Christ saving you means he says "your innocent" Christ taking your shame means he says, "your beautiful". And unless we get this, we'll constantly use our words as weapons. But the reality is that Christ was crushed for my sin so that I don't have to crush you for yours. His being wounded for me frees me from feeling the need to wound you. "Behold the man upon the cross" And it's this love that enables us to do for others what Christ did for us. Our words take life when they distort the truth and inflict pain.

Words That Give Life...

- Words that affirm God's grace in others lives. (Heb. 10:24-25)

An intentional effort to recognize God's character or work in the lives of others.

The Bible is not commanding us to constantly flatter one another we're not just talking about pleasantries. When we encourage we're not just trying to increase people's self-esteem and make people feel good about themselves. We're trying to make people feel good about God's faithfulness in their lives. One way we can do this is to make sure that, in your notes,

- We affirm specifically. **This is what Paul did!**

This is much more meaningful than giving some broadly vague compliment.

- Is there something about God's nature I can recognize in this person?
 - God's kindness, love, mercy, grace, compassion, intelligence, faithfulness, wisdom, patience, strength, discipline, justice. God builds, orders, protects, provides, sustains, creates, nourishes, comforts, works, instructs, leads, forgives, heals and restores.

Can I see how God is working in someone's life? Examples!

"One thing I appreciate about you is..." I think what you said was really _____." "I'm grateful for your _____." "I wish I could be patient like you" can you affirm character? Can you affirm god's work?

(Rom. 12:10) Give more to them than they give to you. When we honor and affirm others we show that getting glory and praise for yourself isn't what drives us. What drives us is the honor and affirmation that has been bestowed on us by God.

So encourage one another by affirming specifically and...

- Words that remind each other of truth. (2 Pet. 1:12-13)

Tom reminding me of how God hears my music. (Ps. 104:26—Leviathan). We are tempted to believe lies every day. We have to tell each other the truth to keep from believing a lie. What we must do is remind each other of what is true. "I know that when I feel that way I have to remind myself..."

- Your value isn't the sum of your achievements.
- God's love for you doesn't depend on your performance for him.

- Boundaries and restrictions aren't the enemy of our joy.

Text a verse. We pray. Write a card. Make a Facebook post.

Questions:

When people hurt me, do I see it as an opportunity to show grace and model Christ's character?

Is what I'm saying to build up or tear down?

Think about it. Don't just speak out of feelings. I feel therefore I speak is terrible.

Are my tone and body language appropriate?

Is my timing appropriate?

Is this the best communication method?

Ask for self-control.