

CHRISTIAN COUNSELING & EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

# WAR OF WORDS

GETTING TO THE HEART  
OF YOUR COMMUNICATION  
STRUGGLES

A  
DISCUSSION  
GUIDE

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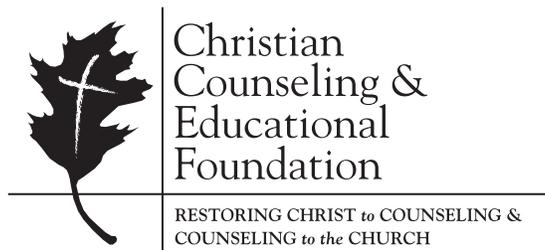
# WAR OF WORDS

DISCUSSION GUIDE *for the*  
TWELVE-PART SERIES  
*on* COMMUNICATION

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# Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation

RESTORING CHRIST to COUNSELING & COUNSELING to the CHURCH

One of the things that separates us from the rest of creation is that, like God, we have the ability to communicate through words. Words shape our relationships, capture our vision, define our plans and convey our thoughts. We love with our words and we hate with our words. With words we make both war and peace. Words are our salve of compassion and our instruments of judgment. Everything we do is connected to our words. They reveal who we are.

How are you doing with your words? Can you say, “I’ve never spoken a word I regret?” Can you say, “I am satisfied with all of my communication this week”? Do you always speak in a way that makes you part of what God is doing in the lives of others?

The purpose of this discussion guide is to take you beyond the principles and themes of the videos to the specific practical choices we make every day. We hope that the questions will clarify each lesson and help you apply it to the lives of those in your discussion group. The guide is a tool; use it in whatever way works best for your group. Use it to:

- 1) Get people talking about their talk;
- 2) Help people to consider the important questions the material addresses;
- 3) Help people make applications to their own hearts and their relationships;
- 4) Find hope in the Lord—the Word—the first and final Speaker.

Remember, God is active right now to redeem our words. He has a purpose for them that is greater than anything we would have dreamed of ourselves.

Pursue that purpose by faith!

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# God Speaks

## I. SIZING UP OUR WORLD OF TALK

- We spend a large and important part of our lives talking—our lives are filled with words.
- The realm of communication is a huge area of difficulty for us, a universal area of struggle. Consider:
  - What if someone videotaped the last few weeks of your communication, and played it publicly?
  - Who can say, “Every word I’ve ever said has been appropriate to the situation and kindly spoken?”
- The Bible has “robust” things to say about this area of our lives.

## II. WORDS IN THE BEGINNING: TALK IS NOT CHEAP

### Genesis 1

- God speaks creation, including humanity, into existence.
- Words belong to the Lord. The trouble comes when we use words as though they were our own.

*“The value of every piece of human communication is rooted in the fact that God speaks.”*

- Despite our tendency to take words for granted, they were ordained by God to have the power of life and death.
- Genesis establishes precedents for our communication.
  - God uses words to reveal the most important things in life: words identify, define, explain, and interpret.
  - Among God’s creation, the gift of words is unique to human beings. “When we speak we are literally in our most God-like moment.”

### III. CONCLUSION

- Our words must always be spoken up to God’s standard and according to his design.
- We must always ask ourselves, “What does God want for my words in this situation?”
- When we forget that our words belong to the Lord and are meant to reflect his glory, we lose our only shelter from difficulty in the area of communication.

*“He is a God who can be known because he is a God who speaks. Scripture presents him as the great standard for all communication.”*

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#### IV. LOOKING AHEAD: FOUR FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- God has a wonderful plan for our words that is far better than any plan we could come up with on our own.
- Sin has radically altered the agenda for our words, resulting in much hurt, confusion, and chaos.
- In Jesus Christ we find the grace that provides all we need to speak as God intended us to speak.
- The Bible plainly and simply teaches us how to get from where we are to where God wants us to be.

#### V. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: EVALUATING YOUR COMMUNICATION

1. How does or doesn't your talk with others lead to biblical problem solving?
2. Are you approachable and teachable or defensive and self-protective when talking with others? How are these attitudes revealed in your words?

*“Jesus is the Word who is the only hope for our words.”*

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3. Is your communication healthy in the principal relationships in your life? (e.g., parent-child, husband-wife, friend-friend, body of Christ, neighbor-neighbor, etc.) What kind of talk do you think harms these relationships?
  
4. How does or doesn't your talk encourage faith and personal spiritual growth in those around you?
  
5. As you face struggles of talk, do you do so with a recognition of the gospel—i.e., acknowledging God's forgiveness, his enabling grace, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit?
  
6. Take time to pray for discernment, honesty and conviction from the Holy Spirit as you consider your communication habits.

# Satan Speaks

## I. PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

- Growth begins with a sense of need, so if listening to the communication in your house is discouraging, take heart.
- Imagine a world of perfect communication—we had it, and our sin ruined it.

## II. WORDS AND THE FALL Genesis 3

In the Fall, for the first time,

- words are used to challenge the authority of God.
- words are used to challenge the truthfulness of God's words.
- a lie is spoken.
- people speak against one another (accusation and blame).

*“Good, godly communication is always dependent on truth...Every word we speak is either rooted in the truth or in a lie.”*

- people speak against God (accusation and blame).

### III. THE RESULTS

- In all of our attempts to tame the tongue we have fallen short. We are in desperate need of help.

**James 3:1-12.** Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

- Even in our moments of fiercest struggle and best intention, we still fail.

**Romans 7:14-15, 21-25.** We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

...So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*“How much of our communication is about passing the blame to others!...Just like Adam, when we blame people and situations for our problems, below the surface we are also making accusations against God.”*

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#### IV. CONCLUSION

- Because of the Fall God's good purpose for our words has been perverted, so that we use words as weapons and as tools of rebellion.
  
- The claim that we can solve communication problems by changes in technique is a lie, a heresy from hell.
  
- The problem with our talk is deeper than technique. It is a heart issue that originated with the Fall.

#### V. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are there areas in your life in which your words challenge the authority of God? (Seeking to take wrongful control, speaking words of condemnation, grumbling and complaining about the situations God has ordained for your life, etc.) Describe these problem areas and specify how your behavior denies or defies God's authority over your talk.

*“With our talk, either we are imaging our Creator and Lord, or we are imaging the Serpent, Satan.”*

*“Remember, Christ not only forgives, he delivers. He not only delivers, he restores. He not only restores, he reconciles.”*

## **WAR OF WORDS**

2. Where do your words reveal that you have bought into an interpretation of life different from what the Lord has revealed in Scripture? And/or how does your talk reveal a consistent, biblical view of life that encourages others to look at life the same way?
  
3. In what ways do you verbally shift the blame for your sinful attitudes and behavior onto God and other people?
  
4. Has your communication been infected with Satan’s lie that the things you need for life can be found outside of Christ? For example, do the following thoughts sound familiar?
  - “I must win this argument.”
  - “This is the way it has to be done.”
  - “I cannot live with \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - “If we could only communicate more effectively, our relationship would be fine.”
  - “I have a right to be happy.”
  
5. Reread the passages from James 3 and Romans 7 and take time to consider, pray, and confess. Start here: “Lord, these passages expose me. I admit that I have not always recognized that my words belong to you. I have not faithfully used language according to your example and plan. I have claimed my words as my own, to be used for my own purpose. I have listened to the Great Deceiver and at many times and in many ways spoken more like him than you. I ask for your forgiveness and plead for your help. I know that you alone are able to tame my tongue. I offer my talk back to you, that my speech may be up to your standard and according to your design.”

# The Word in the Flesh

## I. THE COMING OF THE WORD John 1

**John 1:1-5, 10-14, 16-18.** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

...He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

...From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

- Our need is so fundamental that the only solution is God himself: “It is in the coming of the Word that we find hope for our words.”
  
- The Word is not a technique, system or doctrine, but a person, Jesus Christ.

## II. THE REAL WAR

• **Ephesians 6:10-12.** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

– The war of words is the fruit of a deeper, more fundamental war  
—a spiritual battle fought on the turf of our hearts.

– Our struggle is not with other people. Our problem is not other people.

### • Victory for the Word.

**Matthew 4:1-11.** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

– Jesus' victory over Satan makes our victory possible.

*"The Lord will never put you in a situation without giving you everything you need to do what he has called you to do."*

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- “We ought to be the saddest and most celebrant people in the world.”
- We are satisfied with too little: The Gospel demands and guarantees more for our words.

### III. THE RESOURCES OF CHRIST

**Ephesians 1:15-23.** For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

- Hope.
- Riches.
- Power.
- Rule.

*“Biblical hope is nothing less than a confident expectation of a guaranteed result.”*

*“In Christ we embrace both inability and ability. The Word comes to fill us with his power precisely because we are so weak. But in Christ, we who could not stand now stand able.”*

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#### IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you humbly admit your inability and seek the Lord's help before important times of communication?
2. In your primary relationships, where are you seeking to accomplish with words what only the Lord can do by his grace and power? Why do you tend to behave this way?
3. Where do you fall prey to hopelessness so that you either give up speaking when your words are needed or give in to patterns of sinful talk?
4. What are some of the implications of the coming of the Word for your communication? That is, what difference should the person and work of Christ make in your talk? Why?
5. Do you daily thank the Lord for his provision, and for the hope it gives that your words can bless others and glorify him?
6. Read Ephesians 4 and note every exhortation that applies to communication. Examine your own communication this week according to these guidelines. Remember: These verses are intended for our good, showing us our need for Christ. Confess any sin and ask the Lord to open your eyes to the glorious benefits of Christ's work and the hope it offers for your words.

*“Communication that attempts to find personal security by taking control forgets one of the sweetest provisions of the Word—God’s control over all things for his children.”*

**WAR OF  
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# Idol Words

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## I. WORD PROBLEMS ARE HEART PROBLEMS

• **Luke 6:43-45.** “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

– Word problems are not caused by our circumstances. People and situations are not the causes of sinful talk, only the occasions for it.

– What is in our hearts is revealed in our words.

• **Mark 7:14-15.** Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’”

• **Matthew 23:25-26.** “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” Clean the inside to clean the outside—if the heart changes, words change.

## II. HEART PROBLEMS: RULING DESIRES

**James 4:1-10.** What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think that Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble.”

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wait. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

- Fights and quarrels come not from the outside but from the inside.
  - Quarrels are not ultimately caused by poor communication skills or ineffective verbal strategy.
  - Quarrels are not ultimately caused by other people and situations.
- More specifically, verbal battles reflect heart battles, battles among ruling desires.
  - Desires themselves are not evil.
  - When a healthy desire takes control of my heart, it becomes sinful.
  - Desires that control our hearts control our words.

- A controlling or ruling desire is an idolatrous desire.

– Idolatry: when my heart is controlled or ruled by anything other than God.

– Proper desire, rather, is held with an open hand: “Not my will, but yours, be done.”

### III. THE ELEVATION OF DESIRE

- *Desire* (“I want”) becomes *demand* (“I must”).
- Demand becomes *need* (“I need”).
- Need sets up *expectation* (“I will”, “You should”).
- Expectation *unfulfilled* leads to *disappointment* (“You didn’t”).
- Disappointment leads to some kind of *punishment* (angry words, quarrels: “Because you didn’t, I will \_\_\_\_”).

“It is hard for us to hold our desires loosely. Instead, they tend to take hold of us.”

“We will not solve our problem with angry words until we humbly address the adultery and idolatry of our hearts... Change must include our thoughts and motives as well. We need change both in the content and manner of our talk and in what effectively controls our hearts.”

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#### IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What sorts of situations or circumstances do you tend to blame for your ungodly verbal interactions (e.g. financial problems, exhaustion, misunderstanding, injustice, stress, your job, the weather, a traffic jam, a bad hair day)?
2. Whom do you tend to blame for your sinful uses of words (spouse, boss, teenage child, the president, mother-in-law)? What do such accusations, whether spoken or unspoken, usually sound like?
3. In what ways do you tend to blame God? (e.g., “If only I had \_\_\_\_\_”; “If only \_\_\_\_\_ hadn’t happened.”)
4. Examine your heart with hope, remembering 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

# He is King!

## I. THE WAR OF WORDS IS ESSENTIALLY A WAR FOR SOVEREIGNTY

- Godly communication is rooted in a personal recognition of the sovereignty of God.
  
- Sinful communication is rooted in our own false claim to sovereignty in our lives, giving reign to our ruling desires.

## II. UNDERSTANDING GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

- *God is the unchallenged ruler of the universe.*

**Daniel 4:34-35.** At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion;  
his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  
All the peoples of the earth  
are regarded as nothing.  
He does as he pleases  
with the powers of heaven  
and the peoples of the earth.  
No one can hold back his hand  
Or say to him: “What have you done?”

*“Only when I submit to the rule of God, who has a perfect plan and is in complete control, will I begin to live and speak as he has purposed. Only at this level will the idolatry of heart that leads to idol words be broken. Here alone will my words be freed from being the tools of my agenda, my attempts at control, and my glory-seeking.”*

“God’s rule has a direction and purpose to it: it is for the redemptive benefit of his people.”

“This is the bottom line of biblical communication, the first and highest goal of all our talk: that our words would reflect an attitude of worship that recognizes our utter dependency on God for salvation.”

**WAR OF WORDS**

- *God rules over all things for the church.*

**Ephesians 1:19b-22.** That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

- *God rules over the specific details of our lives.*

**Acts 17:26-27.** “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.”

- *God rules over every aspect of our salvation.*

**Ephesians 1:4-6.** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

(See also: Eph. 2:12, Matt. 13:11-17, John 10:25-30)

- *God rules over circumstances for our sanctification.*

**Romans 8:28-34.** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

(See also James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:3-9)

- *God rules over relationships for my sanctification.*

**Ephesians 4:11-13.** It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

*(See also Eph. 2:14-16, 19-22; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 18-20, 27)*

- *God rules over all things for his glory.*

**Ephesians 1:11-14.** In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

- The turnaround in our world of talk will begin when we submit to his kingship and his sovereignty.

- **Worship and Redemption:** The words we speak must meet two standards.

- They must bring God glory.

- They must bring redemptive good into the lives of the people God has placed around us.

*“Whatever or whoever rules our hearts will control the words we speak. The clear message of Scripture is that we are called to speak out of a thankful heart of submission to God, in every circumstance and situation.”*

**WAR OF WORDS**

#### IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is your communication an attempt to take control?
2. How would your talk be different if you believed and trusted more fully in God's absolute control of everything for your good and his glory?
3. How do you respond when God sends suffering or disappointment your way? Do your internal (heart) and external (word) responses differ? Why?
4. Do you seek to speak in a way that encourages the work God is doing in others?
5. Do you treat certain people as obstacles to your own spiritual growth, or do you see them as God's agents of your sanctification and as potential recipients of God's grace through you? How are these two different attitudes expressed in your words?
6. How, specifically, do your words reveal whether you are resting in God's control or wrestling with it?

# Following the King for All the Wrong Reasons

## I. MANY OF US FOLLOW FOR THE WRONG REASONS

- A Preliminary Question: What is your dream for your life? Be honest. What kind of Messiah do you want Jesus to be in your life, really?

- **John 6:25-36.** When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

“Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.”

- We tend to follow not out of submission to God’s will and a desire for his glory, but as a means of achieving a set of personal desires and dreams.
  
- Accordingly, we use words to get what we want.
  
- Do you want worldly or godly blessing, physical bread or spiritual bread?

## II. THE DECEIVER’S LIES ABOUT PHYSICAL BREAD

- Physical things are permanent.

The truth:

– **1 John.** The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

– See also: 2 Cor. 4:16-18, Ps. 73:18-20

- Physical bread is the only bread.

The truth:

– **Matthew 6:19-21.** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

– **Matthew 6: 31-34.** “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

– See also: Luke 12:20

- Human success is defined by the amount of physical bread you possess.

The truth:

– **Luke 12:15.** Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

– See also: Matt.16:26; 22:37-40

- Life is found in physical bread.

The truth:

– **Deuteronomy 8:3.** He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

– See also: John 4:13-14, Eph. 2:1-10

*“Our entire life will be determined by which bread we pursue. There are no more dangerous lies than the ones that lead us away from a loving hope and surrender to the Creator we cannot see, and towards a bondage to an endless, unsatisfying pursuit of what is passing away.”*

**WAR OF  
WORDS**

### III. GOD'S INTENTION FOR BLESSING

- God intends physical blessing to point us toward spiritual blessing.
  - **John 6:35-40.** Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

- Jesus himself is the bread of life. He is life itself.

- Jesus is King, not the Great Waiter.

- To follow Jesus in order to attain physical bread is to see the miracle and miss the meaning, the sign.

*“The hard call of the gospel is that God sent his Son not so that we could realize our agenda, but that we could be part of his.”*

*“To the degree that you have based your life on something other than the Lord, to that degree God’s love and the hope of the gospel will not comfort you.”*

### IV. OUR WORDS ARE SHAPED BY THE BREAD WE ARE SEEKING

- Our words reveal what we really desire in our hearts, what we are living for.

- What would your words look like if your worldly life fell apart?

**WAR OF WORDS**

## V. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ask yourself:

1. What happens to my prayers and my talk about God when I don't get what I want?
2. How do I speak to others when they seem to stand in the way of my dreams?
3. What happens to my talk when I see others blessed while I struggle?
4. How much do my prayers focus on the deeper heart changes that God is working within me and the wider concerns of his kingdom work?
5. How much does my talk express a spirit of thankfulness and contentment?



# Speaking for the King

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## I. REVIEW

- Our words express either our submission to God’s sovereignty or our desire to usurp that sovereignty over our own lives, living as “mini-kings.”
- In all of our communication we are either honoring God as king or treating him as a “divine waiter.”
- Our words demonstrate whether we are seeking physical blessing or Christ himself, the Bread of Life.

## II. CALLED TO BE AMBASSADORS

**2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2.** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.

For he says,

“In the time of my favor I heard you,  
and in the day of salvation I helped you.”

I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

*“We are not free to advance our own interests with our talk. Our communication must always have an ambassadorial agenda.”*

*“When we live and speak incarnationally, we mirror the work Christ did on earth: he came to make the Father known.”*

*“It is the love of Christ that calls us away from self and motivates us to live for him. Christ’s glorious, substitutionary love is his most compelling argument for change—and his most powerful means for accomplishing it.”*

**WAR OF WORDS**

- As Christ’s ambassadors we have been sent by the King to speak for him.
- We must always ask, “How do I represent the King in this conversation?”

### III. AS AMBASSADORS OF THE KING, WE MUST BE DAILY AND PERSONALLY COMMITTED TO HIS AGENDA.

- The King’s mission: capturing the hearts of his people.
- The King’s methods:
  - Self-sacrifice (Luke 9:23-27; 14: 25-27, 31-33; John 12: 24-25)
  - Forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35; Eph. 4:32-35)
  - Reconciliation (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-19)

#### IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where in your life do you find irritation, anger, or frustration that reveals a commitment to your own agenda and not the Lord's?
2. Where are your opportunities to be a part of what God is doing in others?
3. In what situations do you tend to fight using the verbal weapons of the world?
4. Where and with whom in your life is Christ calling you to self-sacrifice? To forgiveness? To reconciliation?

*“To reconcile means to settle or resolve issues in order to restore a relationship... This is the message of the gospel—that God is at work, through Christ, reconciling the world to himself.”*

**WAR OF  
WORDS**



# Getting to the Destination

## I. BE ENCOURAGED!

**2 Corinthians 12:9.** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

- Conviction of sin is evidence of God’s Spirit at work in your heart.
- To give in to hopelessness is to deny the power of Christ.

## II. PRACTICAL STEPS TO THE DESTINATION

- *Don’t give in to regret (Joel 2:25).*
- *Embrace the hope of the gospel.*
  - God’s grace abounds wherever our sin does (**Rom. 6:14**).
  - God has not and will never forsake us (**Ps. 46**).

*“God always reveals truth to us at the right moment. There is never a mistake in his timing. Instead of regret, we need to rest in his sovereign wisdom.”*

*“If your heart has been exposed to truth and you have thought, done, or said what is wrong, you only have two options. You can confess your sin and place yourself under the forgiving grace of Christ, or you can erect some system of self-justification that makes what God calls sin acceptable to your conscience.”*

*“In my counseling experience I have seen that there is no greater impediment to change than the unwillingness to seek and grant forgive-ness. The lack of forgiveness causes us to fight God rather than submit to him and causes us to stand against rather than with one another.”*

*“The ‘put off’ of confession and repentance must be followed by the ‘put on’ of a specific, practical commitment to a new way of talking.”*

## **WAR OF WORDS**

- God not only forgives, he also empowers, through his Spirit **(Eph. 3:20)**.
- *Examine your fruit (Gal. 6:7).*
- *Uncover your roots (Luke 6:45; Matt. 6:19-21).*
- *Seek forgiveness, “vertically” and “horizontally.”*
- *Freely grant forgiveness (Eph. 4:31-5:2).*
- *Change the rules.*
  - Set specific, practical goals for your communication.
  - Make yourself accountable to others in your communication.
- *Look for opportunities.*





# Citizens in Need of Help

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## I. WHY IS CONFRONTATION NECESSARY?

**Hebrews 3:12-14.** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

- The Christian life is relational.
- Even as believers we give in to subtle patterns of sin that cause a gradual hardening of the heart.
- Sin deceives us into spiritual blindness, so that we cannot see the truth about our own condition.
- Real insight into our spiritual condition is a product of community—fellow believers serve as our spiritual mirrors.
- Biblical confrontation is part of what it means to “encourage one another daily.”

*“The reason for this daily ministry is not a specific act of sin, but the overall condition of spiritual blindness that results from the deceitfulness of sin.”*

*“The radical stance of the New Testament is that intervention is not limited to occasional moments of confrontation. Rather, it is a lifestyle, a commitment that shapes all of our interactions as members of the body of Christ... In some way our talk should always have ongoing redemption in view.”*

## II. ENCOURAGE: A MODEL OF BIBLICAL CONFRONTATION

- Examine your heart.
- Note your calling.
- Check your attitude.
- Own your own faults.
- Use words wisely.
- Reflect on Scripture.
- Always be prepared to listen.
- Grant time for a response.
- Encourage the person with the gospel.

*“I do not approach ministry from a position of confidence in my own strength and wisdom, encouraging you to be like me. No, I come in weakness and sin, to lead you to the only One who has strength and deliverance to offer.”*

## III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: EXAMINING YOUR CONFRONTATION STYLE

1. Critique the last time you confronted someone, using the **ENCOURAGE** model as a guide. In what ways did you follow a biblical model? In what ways do you need to change the way you confront others?

**WAR OF  
WORDS**





# First Things First

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## I. OUR CONTEXT: A FALLEN WORLD

- We are sinners living among sinners.
- We live in the midst of broken relationships.
- Change in our lives and in the world starts with repentance.

## II. THE FOUNDATIONS OF REPENTANCE

- **Repentance:** a radical change in heart that leads to a radical change of behavior.
- Remember the promises of the gospel:
  - *Forgiveness* (1 John 1:9)
  - *Deliverance* (Rom. 6:1-14)
  - *Strength* (Eph. 1:19-20)

*“God shows us our sin and failure not as an act of condemnation, but as an act of redeeming love. As a Father he disciplines his children for the purpose of making us holy.”*

*“Don’t let your sense of failure cause you to turn from the Lord in guilt and shame. Turn to him and see in his face the loving acceptance of a father, a father who forces you to see yourself as you really are because he loves you deeply and fully.”*

**WAR OF WORDS**

– *Restoration* (**Joel 2:12-27**)

– *Reconciliation* (**John 17:20-23; Eph. 2:14-18**)

– *Wisdom* (**James 1:5**)

– *Mercy* (**Heb. 4:14-16**)

### III. STEPS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

#### “PUT OFF”

- **Consideration**—a willingness to examine myself, resting in the power of the cross to cover my sin.
- **Confession**—accepting and owning my wrong and speaking it to God and other people.

#### “PUT ON”

- **Commitment**—committing to concrete and specific new ways of talking.
- **Change**—living differently (i.e. in a godly way) as a result of a changed heart.

#### IV. EXAMINING YOUR HEART

**Psalm 139:23-24**      *Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

- Ask God to show you the heart behind your words, and to convict you where you have sinned first in your heart and then with your mouth.
  
- Go through the “repentance cycle:”
  - *Consider.* What things in my communication does God want me to see?
  
  - *Confess.* Where is God calling me to accept responsibility before God and others for my words and their consequences?
  
  - *Commit.* What new heart attitudes and subsequent ways of speaking is God calling me to put on?
  
  - *Change.* How do these new attitudes and actions need to be carried out in my daily life? How do I speak in a brand new way in this area?
  
- Do it again tomorrow. And the next day. And so on.

*“Remember, God has already given you ‘everything you need for life and godliness.’”  
(2 Peter 1:3)*

**WAR OF  
WORDS**



# Winning the War of Words

## I. WHAT WINNING LOOKS LIKE

**Galatians 5:13-6:2.** You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

- *Recognizing the destructive power of words (v. 15).*
  
- *Affirming our freedom in Christ (v. 13, see also 5:1-6).*
  - Freedom *from* bondage to the law.

*“Winning the war is about being prepared to say the right thing at the right moment, exercising self-control. It is refusing to let our talk be driven by passion and personal desire but communicating instead with God’s purposes in view. It is exercising the faith necessary to be part of what God is doing at that moment.”*

*“The way of Christ is never selfish, never self-absorbed. Christ’s love is other-directed, other-focused, and self-sacrificing... We are called to speak to one another out of this ‘burden-bearing’ mentality.”*

**WAR OF WORDS**

- Freedom to obey Christ.
  
- *Saying “No” to the sinful nature (vv. 13, 24).*
  - Christ’s work gives us power to rise above our sinful passions and desires.
  
  - We are no longer slaves to our emotions.
  
- *Speaking to serve others in love (vv. 13-14).*
  - Put off self-indulgent words.
  
  - Put on the love of a servant.
  
- *Speaking “in step with the Spirit” (v. 25).*
  
- *Speaking with a goal to restore (6:1-2).*
  - “Restoration” rather than “remodeling.”
  
  - Restore “gently.” Aim at the heart.

## II. IN SHORT, SPEAK REDEMPTIVELY

- The goal is restoration and reconciliation, not human happiness.

- Remember who you are: a sinner dependent on God’s grace.
- Remember who he is: the Great Redeemer.
- The King is here—change is possible!

### III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where and with whom do you tend to forget your freedom in Christ and wind up indulging the sinful nature? Take time to identify your personal battlefields.
2. List the powerful emotions (i.e. anger, discouragement, jealousy, fear) and desires (i.e. revenge, respect, control, success, love) to which you need to say “No.” To what fruits of the Spirit is God calling you instead?
3. List specific areas wherein God is calling you to use words to serve others in love.

4. Where do you see the need for restoration around you? How can your words help? What daily opportunities do you have to be a part of God's work in others?

*“Remember, because of what Christ has done, we can say ‘no’ to the passions and desires of the sinful nature. We can serve each other in love even in the face of provocation.”*

**WAR OF  
WORDS**

# Choosing Your Words

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## I. CHRIST MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO CHOOSE YOUR WORDS IN EVERY SITUATION

## II. PREPARING TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT WORDS

- *Own your faults and confess your need to God.*
  
- *Acknowledge the grandeur of God's grace to you (2 Pet. 1:3-9).*
  
- *Say "No!"*
  
- *Say "Thank-you!"*

*"As we prepare to speak to one another, the storm of human emotion needs to be calmed by the rest and hope of worship."*

### III. SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

**Ephesians 4:14-15.** Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

- **Choosing words of truth:** In choosing your words, ask yourself:

- *What truths of Scripture help interpret and explain this situation for me?*
- *What does God want to show this person about himself, his love and grace, his will, and his truth?*
- *What does God want to show this person about his or her own heart?*
- *What does God want to show this person about others?*
- *What is God calling this person to do?*
- *How, with my words, can I best help this person to understand these things?*

- **Choosing words of love**

- **1 Corinthians 13:4-7.** Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

- Ask yourself, *“Do my words meet the biblical standard of love?”*

*“Choosing your words does not mean writing a script for every conversation. Rather, it means being redemptively intentional.”*

*“Finger-pointing lectures are counterproductive. So is the recitation of biblical platitudes unexplained and unapplied... What we want to do first is to incarnate the wonderful love of the Lord we represent. We want people to see him, to rest in him and follow him.”*

**WAR OF WORDS**

#### IV. SPEAKING WITH RESTRAINT

- Choose words with self-control (**Rom. 8:9**).
- Choose honest words (**Eph. 4:25-27**).
- Do not be controlled by anger.
  - Don't "clam up."
  - Don't "blow up."

#### V. SPEAK WORDS OF GRACE

**Ephesians 4:29-30.** Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- Consider the person to whom you are talking. ("...only what is helpful for building others up...")
- Consider the problem you are being called to address. ("...according to their needs...")
- Consider the process. ("...that it may benefit those who listen.")

*"Our failure to speak clear words of forgiveness to someone who has wronged us may be the most common way we hinder the Spirit's work and give the Devil an opportunity. Words of forgiveness do more than just heal human relationships; they promote God's work of conforming us to Christ."*

*"In every situation I need to ask, 'What is the best way for my words to accomplish God's goal of grace?' The answer will be different according to the situations and people involved."*

**WAR OF  
WORDS**

*“The tongue will serve the master to which the heart is already committed. It is time for us to submit to the Lord’s claim on our tongues as King and Redeemer.”*

*“The war of words is only won when God rules our hearts so that we gladly and consistently speak for him. May God help us, so that this world of evil will be transformed into a world of redemptive good.”*

**WAR OF  
WORDS**

## VI. CONCLUSION

- Have hope.
- Don’t be willing to be ineffective and unproductive with your words.
- Words are one of our highest and holiest callings.
- Your words can be tamed by Christ: get what belongs to you in him.

## VII. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: A FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. In what settings or relationships is your talk lacking in restraint (e.g. rebuking a disobedient child, in disagreements, in moments of anger, in the office, on the basketball court, in the midst of traffic, when tempted to gossip among friends)?
2. To whom do you need to offer words of forgiveness now?
3. As you have worked through this series, what have you learned about the thoughts and motives of your heart?





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