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# [Week 2] War of Words - When Satan Speaks Manuscript

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Good morning and welcome to our second class in this *War of Words* AM seminar.

**PRAY**

How many of you were not here last Sunday for the first class? The content for this AM Seminar is adapted from the book *War of Words* by Paul Tripp, helping us examine something that sets us apart from the rest of creation, something we do repeatedly every day. We talk. "Talk" seems so normal, so ordinary, so harmless. Yet there are few things we do that are more important. Underneath the normality of our talking is a great struggle, a war of words that we fight every day. Who hasn't been hurt by the words of another? Who hasn't regretted something they said? The purpose of this seminar:

1. Is NOT to teach us new techniques and skills for effective communication; there are many courses that you can take for that. Neither is it about how we can be politically correct, or how we can use words to be on the right side of people and win their favor; Rather, the purpose of this seminar is to address the root from which our words find their source: the human heart. There is a battle for our hearts and we will look at how this great battle is the reason for our struggle with words.
2. Not only will we examine this battle, we’ll also look at God’s plan for our talk and his grace that enables it.
3. We will be considering how the gospel transforms the way we communicate. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word, is the only hope for our words. In our war of words, he is the one who gives us the victory.

Notice the outline of the course at the back of the handout. (It is divided into three sections). Last week, our brother Mark Ben kicked us off with the first lesson, in which we considered just how powerful, important and significant words are - more than we perhaps realize. We saw that when we speak, it must be with the realization that God has given our words significance and value. We do not really understand the significance of words until we realize that the first words that human ears ever heard in Genesis 1 were not the words of a human being, but the words of God. The value of every piece of human communication is rooted in the fact that *God* speaks.

And yet we also know that we no longer live in the wonderful world of Genesis 1, where every word that was spoken was consistent with God's standard and design. In the Garden of Eden, there were no sins of speech or talk. So the big question is: what happened for simple human communication to become such an occasion of sin and struggle? What exactly made it so hard for us to speak as God designed? In order to develop a biblical understanding of communication, we cannot stop at Genesis 1. While it is still true that God speaks, and it is still true that everything we say is rooted in his words to us, there was another speaker in the garden. His arrival began the great war of words that we now fight daily, hence the title of today’s class: when Satan speaks. Would somebody please **READ Genesis 3:1-13** out loud.

Into the perfect world of the garden came the voice of the serpent. For the first time, the position, the authority and the very words of God were being challenged. For the first time words were spoken that were not consistent with God's standard and design. Satan spoke, and with his words, the simple world of human communication became a confusing arena of sin and struggle. All of our trouble with our speech has its roots here in this dramatic moment of change in the garden. Just how dramatic was this moment? Notice in your handout 4 trouble-generating “firsts” in the world of communication, that took place here.

**I. God’s authority challenged**

For the very first time, the authority of God is challenged. Until this moment, there were no verbal challenges to God's authority on earth. The world God had made existed in complete submission to his authority and will. Adam and Eve were obediently living out their identity as God's creatures, as his image bearers and his resident regents and managers on earth.

All of their responses to God and all of their conversations with each other were carried out with unbroken submission to God. What took place in the moment the serpent spoke is dramatic and unthinkable. For the first time ever, words were spoken that challenged God's authority. The world would never be the same again. **READ Genesis 3:1b**

Imagine what our lives would look like if all our words were spoken out of perfect submission to God, how much less complicated our lives would be. Many of the problems we experience when talking with one another emerge from the fact that we have usurped the authority of God. We say what we want to say, when we want to say it, how we want to say it. We speak as if we are in charge and as if we have the right to use words to advance our purpose and to achieve what would make us happy.

We speak as if we were God, rather than his creatures who are called to submit to his authority in every idle word we speak.

**II. Listening to lies**

When the serpent speaks in the garden, a second problem is introduced. For the very first time, a lie is spoken. This is the origin of fake news. Until that moment, every conversation was perfectly, completely truthful. God's words were utterly reliable, and life could be built upon them. Adam and Eve's words to each other were trustworthy because they were consistent with the words of God. But here, shockingly, the serpent purposely lies to advance his purpose. He is not mistaken; he has not forgotten what is true. He's not ignorant or lacking in understanding. He knows that what he is saying is untrue. That is *why* he says it! He does not want Adam and Eve to live in the light of truth or in obedience to God. He seeks to sell them a lie and he seeks to make that lie plausible. **READ Genesis 3:4, John 8:44**

It is, again, a moment of dramatic change. Good, godly communication is always dependent on truth. Lies, falsehood, and deception always subvert it. Lies not only distort facts but they destroy the trust necessary for people to talk with one another. Every word we speak is rooted either in the truth or in a lie. Most of our communication problems come because we deceive, distort and manipulate with our words. We reshape the facts to our advantage. We recast events often to the point of convincing ourselves that our perspective is true.

**III. Different interpretation of life from God’s**

Thirdly, in that dramatic moment in the garden, we also see an interpretation of life that is different from God’s for the first time. Do you recognise what Satan is doing here? He's taking the same set of facts that God already interpreted for Adam and Eve, and he’s giving them a radically different spin. If his interpretation were to be believed, the listener would no longer think it was good, right, or necessary to obey God. In fact, one would say that if the serpent’s interpretation were right, it would actually be foolish to continue to obey God. **READ Genesis 3:5.** Never before on earth had there been an interpretation opposing God’s. Up until this point, everything Adam and Eve understood about their world had been based on the interpretation God had given them.

Today, we live in a confusing world of many interpretations. Most of them do not recognise the authority of God or operate with any desire to view life in a way that is consistent with his word. This raises an extremely important point: you and I do not respond to the people or circumstances in our lives on the basis of the facts. We may think we do, but really our responses are based on the way we interpret those facts. Many of our problems with words would be solved if we simply paused and asked ourselves how God would evaluate and respond to the present situation. We often just let our thoughts run, without challenging them, but if our interpretation of events is wrong, our words will not be right.

This is a principle that we do not want to miss: *Word problems are often interpretation problems.* We do not say the right thing because we do not believe the right thing. This is what happened in the garden. A Pandora's box of trouble opened as, for the first time, Adam and Eve heard and believed an interpretation that was not consistent with God’s. Satan's voice was the first of thousands of voices throughout history that would come to challenge what God has spoken.

When an enraged father stands over his teenage son and says *“I don't care what it takes – if it is the last thing I do, I'll get you to respect me!,”* he has spoken words that stand in opposition to God's words to him as a father. It is a view that respect is a right that can be demanded. When a wife says to her husband, *“In all my other relationships, I'm okay, but you make me so angry!,”* her words reflect an interpretation of her own anger that stands in opposition to what God says. It’s a view that says my anger is an inevitable outcome that is produced by someone else and that I bear no responsibility. When an employee says, *“If he hadn't given the job to her, I wouldn't be so bitter!,”* his problem is not just his words, but the attitudes behind them. This idea that bitterness is somehow permissible in light of what someone else has done. In each example, what is wrong is not just vocabulary and tone of voice but a way of looking at life that does not agree with what God says is right and true. Yes, the actions and words of others may trigger something within us, but the bottom line is that they merely reveal something that is already within us. Yesterday we had the book of Mark read to us, and what did Jesus say in **READ Mark 7:14-23** This list in v.22 includes a number of sins in our speech, such as deceit and slander. The things that are within the heart of man are not inevitable responses to outside stimuli. We don’t get to just blame others for triggering us, rather when that which is already in us comes out, it is an opportunity for us to confess, seek forgiveness and grow in the grace of overlooking offenses and being slow to anger. It is a mark of spiritual maturity to be one who is difficult to offend. **READ Proverbs 19:11**

**IV. Accusations and blame**

The Serpent’s words brought about another first that day in the garden: for the first time, people spoke against one another. Up to this point there had been no critical, condemning, angry words. There had been no accusations or put downs. No throwing a person's words or actions back in his or her face. Up until this point, Adam and Eve's relationship was free of this for they were still free of sin. But after they ate the fruit, we see a dramatic change, not only in their relationship with God, but in their relationship with each other. When God asks Adam about eating the forbidden fruit, Adam is quick to accuse Eve. He doesn’t stand with her, he doesn’t protect her. He doesn’t act as an intercessor or an advocate pleading her case to God. **READ Genesis 3:11-13**

Have you considered that there was actually a moment between Eve biting the fruit and Adam not biting the fruit where the whole history of the gospel could have been lived out right there. Eve has eaten the fruit, the consequence of which is death. Adam hasn't. Imagine God comes to the garden at that point and Adam says kill me instead. Now we know Adam did not do that, but is this not what Jesus did when he came? As the second Adam, to do what the first Adam should have done but failed to do. So in the NT, the second Adam comes and he says, I will die so that my bride doesn't have to die. I'll take the wages of sin so that she can be forgiven. So Adam had an opportunity to be like what Christ later was, but instead he stands aside, pointing a finger, and essentially says, “Blame her, God, she's the one who got me into this mess.”

How much of our communication is about passing the blame to others! We say things like:

“You make me so angry!” or

“If you hadn't <fill in the blank>, then I wouldn't have <fill in the blank>.” or

“I was never this way before I met you!” or

“Whenever you do that, I just can't control myself.” or

“I was never like this before I had children.” or

“If you weren’t such a good cook, I wouldn't have this weight problem.”

Who among us isn't tempted to accuse and blame when the heat of responsibility is put on us? In times of difficulty, we often are more ready to assign blame than to seek solutions. Barely a day goes by without blame being on our lips or in our ears.

But there's another dimension to this problem. For the first time words of accusation are spoken against God. When Adam is approached by God after he has eaten the fruit, he points the finger not only at Eve but at God. Adam says, “God, if you hadn't given me this woman, none of this would have happened. God, it's your fault; you created her and look what she has done to me now!” Just like Adam, when we blame people and situations for our problems, below the surface we are also making accusations against God.

When a husband says, *“My wife makes me so angry!,”* his finger is pointed not only at his wife, but at God, who ordained the relationship. A person who says, *“I would be more active in the ministries of my church, if I didn't have to work so hard to make ends meet,”* is essentially saying, *“God, it's your fault. If you would do a better job of providing for me, I could serve you in the way I really desire.”* A parent who says, *“I was much more relaxed and patient before I had children,”* is actually blaming God for the parental burden that he finds overwhelming. At the Fall, the God who is to be loved, obeyed, and served became the scapegoat for the sins of his people. In much of our talk today, we hear the same subtle accusations against God.

So we’ve seen the 4 trouble-generating “firsts” in the world of communication, that took place here: words that challenge God's authority, lies, false interpretations of life, accusations and blame against both God and man all have their origin in this dramatic moment of change. Satan speaks, and as Adam and Eve act upon his words, the world of talk becomes a world of trouble. No longer do we simply reflect the image of God with our words, we also reflect the image of the Serpent. No longer do we consistently speak up to God's standard; we often speak down to the Serpent’s standard. No longer are our words a faithful picture of God's design; too often they picture Satan's deceit. Talk is no longer easy or safe. Instead, we live in a world where lies manipulate, angry words wound, falsehood destroys, slander harms, condemnation tears down and disrespectful words challenge the authorities God has set in place.

Who among us has not regretted things we have said as a parent, a spouse, a friend, a neighbour, or a worker? Which of us has not longed to take back our words – to somehow erase the record so that they would no longer exist in memory? Who among us has not had to go back repeatedly to our children, our spouses, or our friends to ask forgiveness for the things we said, or for the way we said them? Just this past week, even as I’ve been preparing to teach this class, the Lord reminded me that I still have such a long way to go. I’ve had to apologize for my words and seek forgiveness for speaking in a way that did not glorify God. Lord deliver us.

**A Restless Evil**

James captures this world of trouble with dramatic words. He alerts us to the amount and significance of the damage that can be done through our words. Could somebody please **READ James 3:3-12**. For James, the tongue is a “world of evil,” “corrupting the whole person,” and “setting the whole cause of his life on fire.”

He likens it to a bit, a rudder, a spark and an untamable animal. With our talk, either we are imaging our creator and Lord or we are imaging the serpent, Satan. Our words build and give life, or they tear down and destroy.

The Book of Proverbs also depicts the war of words that is so much a part of life in the fallen world. In your handout, you see some representative passages. **READ Proverbs 12:6,17-19, 17:4,7, 18:2,8,21, 29:5,8,20.**

The Proverbs pointedly depict the “world of evil” that is the tongue. This world is pictured in every book of scripture. We need to humbly confess that there is trouble with our talk. The words of James and the Proverbs depict us. We have not spoken in a way that upholds God's standard and design. We often have descended to the standard of the Father of Lies, the one who deceives, divides and destroys – that is Satan himself.

We have laid traps with our mouths. We have seduced with our words. Our talk has stirred up dissension. We have said too much and we've spoken in haste. Our words have been reckless. We have given into gossip and in our anger, our words have been malicious. We have been quarrelsome. At times, we have delighted to air our own opinions. We have given in to mocking humour. We have betrayed the confidence of others with our words.

**Genesis 3 and Our Words**

What should we take away from our consideration of communication in Genesis 3? We must begin by humbly acknowledging that our words have their roots. Not only in the words of the Lord (as we saw last Sunday in Genesis 1), but also in the words of the Serpent (Genesis 3). With this admission, we confess that our communication struggle is not primarily a struggle of technique, but a struggle of the heart. Our war of words is not with other people; it is a battle within. Will we speak in a way that images the Lord, the Great Speaker, or in a way that images the Serpent, the Great Deceiver? Who will control our hearts and our words?

The war of words introduced in Genesis 1 and 3 is depicted throughout the rest of scripture. We fight it daily in our own lives. Our words now divide, deceive, and destroy. They are a world of evil, causing a world of trouble. Talk is not cheap. Its cost is great.

How do we deal with this problem? Each of us needs to say, “Lord, these passages expose me. I admit that I have not always recognised that my words belong to you. I have not faithfully communicated 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 I plead for your help. I know that you alone are able to tame my tongue. I offer my speech back to you, that I may speak up to your standard and according to your design.”

And as we confess, we need to embrace the glorious promise of the gospel captured by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Nowhere is our weakness more dramatically revealed than in our struggle with words. But we need not despair. Christ has come. The second Adam who came and did what the first Adam failed to do. He has lived, died, and risen for us! In him, we find not only forgiveness, but deliverance from sins of the heart that lead to sins of the tongue. He has given us his Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. In utter weakness, our hearts can be filled with joy as we reflect on the grandeur of Christ's provision. In him, our words find their hope.

**Getting Personal**

Evaluate your world of talk. Are there places where your words have followed the pattern of the enemy more than the Lord? Take time to consider, pray, and confess. Confess to God and the people with whom you live and work.

1. Are there places where your words challenge the authority of God? (This can take the form of seeking to take wrongful control, or speaking words of condemnation, or punishing others with words, or undermining the authority of God-appointed leaders, or grumbling and complaining about the situations God has ordained for your life, etc.)
2. Do your words reveal places where you have bought into an interpretation of life that is different from the Lords (as revealed in scripture)? In other words, does your talk reveal a consistent, biblical view of life that encourages others to look at life the same way? (For example, outbursts of anger during a traffic jam versus using the time to have a wholesome conversation with whoever you may be travelling with.)
3. Has your communication been infected with Satan's lie that the things you need for life can be found outside of Christ?
   * “I must win this argument.”
   * “I must have her love, appreciation and respect.”
   * “I'll get him to admit it if it's the last thing I do!”
   * “This is the way it has to be done.”
   * “I cannot live with <such and such>.”
   * “I have the right to my happiness.”

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

**Q&A**

**PRAY**