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# **[Week 8] War of Words - Getting to the Destination Manuscript**

**RECAP**

* Who would like to remind us; what is God’s destination for our talk? Where would God want us to be in our communication? Put differently, what is God's standard/plan for our talk? [***allow people to respond***]
  + We are ambassadors of God, and our talk should reflect that.
  + We are to use the methods of the king and image his character in our talk.
  + The methods of the king are first and foremost aimed at a heart change as the heart is the problem.
  + The tools for change that we learnt last week are self-sacrifice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. And these three form the boundaries for our words as God’s ambassadors.
    - On self-sacrifice we learnt that for us to speak as God would have us, we have to die to one of the most powerful idols, the idol of self. We are to do and say nothing out of selfish ambition. We basically, die to self to speak for him.
    - We also learnt that we are to speak out of a forgiving heart with a commitment to reconciliation.
  + And so the destination of our communication can be summarized as communication that is God honouring and people benefitting.

**INTRODUCTION**

* Now, whenever you’re thinking about the communication destination or the standard of talk that God has set for us, how would you say that has made you feel? [***allow people to respond***]
  + It can feel discouraging.
  + It can feel like an impossible task.
* But our class today is about hope.
* Maybe you've attended this class, and you've felt how far your communication is from where God wants it to be. Perhaps you’ve seen – more clearly than ever before – how far your talk is from the God’s destination for our talk. And maybe you've felt hopeless than ever.
* Well, the class today is about giving us hope and help.
* As we rebuild our world of talk, we need help and hope.

**SOME PRACTICAL STEPS TO HELP US GET TO THE DESTINATION.**

1. **Don't give in to regret** – “if only I knew all this before I spoke to my [fill in the blank]”... “if only I had stumbled on this class sooner. If only I read the book war on words before I used my words to tear down my relationships”. It's easy to become paralyzed by "if onlys” and side-tracked by questioning god’s timing. It’s also easy to look at the damage your words have caused to others and give up hope of mending some relationships. But here are some things to consider that could help to counter this regret.
   1. We should know that God is a wonderful counselor. He is the universe's best teacher. He knows exactly how much truth we're able to understand and bear. God always reveals truth to us at the right moment. Instead of regret we need to rest in His sovereign wisdom.
   2. We also need to know that scripture promised that God will "restore what the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2:25). The God who forgives also restores, rebuilds and reconciles. As we live in light of the new things he has taught us, we will experience restoration in places where we had long since given up. Through our present obedience to the new insights, God works to restore the damage done in the past.
2. **Embrace gospel hope** – we mustn't allow ourselves to look at our communication struggles as giants that cannot be defeated. 2 Timothy 1:7 says that God did not give us a spirit of timidity but of power, love and self discipline. We get overwhelmed, fearful and timid when we forget who we are in Christ. And so we need to remember three things.
   1. One, we must remember that we are recipients of grace that abounds wherever our sin does. Our sin doesn't confound our saviour. Because His death, burial and resurrection guarantee our victory. Grace is availed to us in every situation and r/ship of our lives and is made perfect in our weakness!
   2. Number 2, we must remember that trouble does not mean that God has forsaken us. God is an ever-present help in times trouble – Psalm 46:1-3 [***ask someone to read***]. God doesn't just care for us in trouble. He isn't just available to help us in trouble. He is there in the trouble as a refuge and strength. We are never without a source of strength because God is always near!
   3. Number 3, God knows that our condition as sinners was so desperate and his calling so high that forgiveness would not be enough. His power lives and works in us - Ephesians 3:20-21 [***ask someone to read***]. And so, God forgives but also empowers. He will not call us to do anything without giving us what we need to do it.
3. **Examine your fruit** – what's the fruit produced by your communication? Do you leave others encouraged, hopeful, and loved? Do your words lead to forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace? Does your communication impart wisdom and encourage faith? Or do your words lead to discouragement, division, condemnation, bitterness, and foolishness? Change begins with a humble willingness to examine your harvest. Own it before the Lord and take courage in the Lord's promise of forgiveness and his powerful presence.
4. **Uncover your roots** – a few classes back we learnt that our mouths speak out of the overflow of our hearts. Examining where we have trouble with our talk will reveal what is ruling our hearts. Our hearts control our words. People and situations provide occasion for the heart to express itself. Uncovering the root of our talk is getting to the sin in our hearts and confessing it to God and he'll open to you and me the floodgates of his forgiveness and power - 1 John 1:9. [***Read this verse***]
5. **Seek forgiveness** – whenever our hearts are exposed, there are two options for us. We could either confess our sins and find the forgiving grace of Christ or we could erect a system of self-justification.
   1. And self-justification is something we're good at, aren’t we? We usually like to blame others. At times we claim physical weakness as a reason for our sins. We also re-interpret events to make our sins excusable. Thus, all this is done to excuse what God says is inexcusable.
   2. But seeking forgiveness on the other hand is like weeding a garden. It leaves the soil of the soul free to grow in the new life of obedience. In seeking forgiveness, we quite fighting against the Lord and become cooperative, submissive participants resulting in a harvest of good fruit.
6. **Freely grant forgiveness** – here there are two aspects to the rebuilding process.
   1. First, judicial forgiveness - willingness to let go of another's offense before God. Surrendering to God the right and desire for vengeance.
   2. The second aspect of forgiveness is relational forgiveness. The willingness to forgive anyone who comes seeking it. Ephesians 4:32 [***Read this text***].
7. **A new commitment** – a commitment to the new way of speaking needs to follow the sweet obedience of forgiveness. This new commitment needs to be as specific as the sin that was confessed. **Question.** What is God calling you to change in your communication? What new ways of speaking must replace the old patterns. ***Please take a few seconds to write that down.***
   1. 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. This commitment to change is rooted in a living faith in the presence of the Lord.
8. **Look for opportunities** – this is not so much a change of direction as it is a change of perspective. Those situations that were the source of difficulty, those moments where unkind, selfish and ungodly words were spoken – can become opportunities to experience the enabling grace of the Lord. As you forsake regret, bathe yourself in the gospel, face your sin, and seek and grant forgiveness, you'll get a vision for a whole new life of communication. So refuse to give in to dread, doubt and running away from communicating altogether. Live boldly. Capture redemptive opportunities. Seize the promises provisions of the Lord. He will give you many opportunities to speak in a new way.
9. **Choose your words** – Proverbs 15:28 [***ask someone to read***]. It says the heart of the righteous weighs its answers. We're also told that it is folly to speak in haste. We must therefore learn to think before we speak. We must learn to choose our words wisely. We've all said or thought to ourselves in regret "*I wish I hadn't spoken soon*" or "*I just got carried away*" or “*I wish I could take those words back*". We're called to use our words to God's glory and to the good of neighbour. And so, let’s think and choose words that image our king and savior.
10. **Confess your weakness** – one of the sure signs that we have yet to understand the gospel fully is when we continue to be afraid of our weaknesses. When we get discouraged by and are unwilling to accept our weakness. Christ came precisely because we are weak. Paul said he would boast all the more gladly about his weaknesses in 2 Cor 12:9. It wasn't because he loved being weak but because it was in weakness that the power of Christ rested on him. Our weakness will not get in the way of what the Lord wants to do in us. The power of God is for the weak and the faint. Because of his grace, we're free to run to him and not from him.
11. **Don't give the devil an opportunity** – Satan is a liar and a trickster. He seeks to divide and destroy. He seeks to turn us from God and against one another. We must, therefore, be wise to his tricks and do anything we can to keep him from having his way with us. How do we shut the door to Satan and his cruel work?
    1. Committing ourselves to the courage of honesty. We bring our issues to light and confess
    2. Committing ourselves to the humility of approachability. And so, a commitment to speak truthfully when coupled with a humble willingness to listen will keep us from providing the devil an opportunity.

**SPEAKING OUT OF HOPE**

* God will not call you to anything that he does not enable you to do. He is able and is the great author of change.
* God has a wonderful plan for our words that is far better than anything we could come up with on our own.
* Sin has radically altered our agenda for our own words, resulting in much hurt, confusion, and chaos.
* In Christ, we find the grace that provides all that we need to speak as God has planned.

**CONCLUSION**

* In conclusion, God has given us everything we need for God honouring, people benefitting communication. We need to step forward in courage of faith, confessing our sin and weakness and embracing the hope found only in his forgiving enabling grace
* Leave regret behind and take hold of hope found in the presence and work of Jesus.
* Examine the fruit of your communication and trace it back to root issues in the heart.
* Seek and grant forgiveness. Agree with those around you to put down the old human way that leads to death.
* Take up with joy the wonderful commands and principles of God’s word. Look for opportunities to apply the new things God is teaching you about his way of communication.
* With joy speak words that have been chosen because they are acceptable to God and beneficial to others.
* Be ready and willing to confess your weakness every day. Be humbly approachable.
* Finally refuse to give the devil an opportunity.
* Remember God knows what you need. If the enemy is too strong God will defeat him. If you have sinned, he will forgive. If you’re weak he’ll empower. He is the redeemer, and he has come. Therefore, there’s hope for our talk.

**Q&A**

* Any questions?

**REFLECTIVE SESSION**

We will now take a few minutes for personal reflections. We will read the questions at the back of the handout. As we read these questions, please…

* Take time to examine the fruit of your communication.
* Also ask yourself, what is God calling me to change in my communication? Or what new ways of speaking should replace my old patterns.
* Afterward, we’ll take time to plead with God for strength and for help to change our ways of communication.

[***Ask/look for someone to read the questions***]

1. Where have you been tempted to believe Satan’s discouraging lies? (“He/she/they’ll never change! It is impossible to forgive him/her/them after the horrible things they’ve said. God doesn’t really care about your communication; he has better, more important things to do. Your anger really isn’t your fault. If others lived where you do, they would be angry too! Being humble just gives people an opportunity to take advantage of you”, etc.)
2. What communication regrets do you need to leave behind? What “if onlys” have gotten in the way of the change to which God has called you?
3. What specific verbal sins do you need to confess? To whom?
4. Which God’s promises do you need to remember daily so that you will have hope in the midst of the struggle?
5. Where do you need to start right now, as you seek to cooperate with God who is willing and able to restore your world of talk? What immediate changes is he calling you to?

Please take time to thank God for his grace availed to us through the gospel.

Please also take time to think about what God is calling you to change in your communication.

Then plead with him for strength to help you change your ways of communication that you may speak as he has called you to speak.

Let’s now take a moment of reflection.

**PRAYER**

* Thank God for the grace availed in the gospel through Christ’s work at the cross.
* Confess our sins and how much we’ve fallen short in our communication. How selfish and unforgiving we have been.
* Acknowledge that God has called us to speak for him as ambassadors.
* Ask God for help and strength to speak as God would have us speak.
* Ask God to keep us from falling into regrets and to help us be bold to communicate as his ambassadors. And that we would rest in His sovereign wisdom.