

The Revealing Nature of Our Words

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[0 : 01] Kellyanne Conway, you know her. She's one of the most powerful individuals in this country. Her official title is Counselor to the President of the United States.

She also ran Donald Trump's presidential campaign, led him to success. Well, about two months ago, on January the 9th was the date, she tried to defend Donald Trump's loose tongue with this statement, you always want to go by what's come out of his mouth rather than look at what's in his heart.

She made that statement in a live interview. You can go online and just look it up, read it for yourself, or watch it. I want to be very clear that in no way was intended to be a political slap at her or President Trump.

I hope and pray that he will be a great president and help our country, and she'll help him along the way. But that is a demonstration or an example of someone who tries to downplay the importance of our words.

Now, when I first read that, I was stunned. She was telling us, telling the world, not to listen to what the President-elect of the United States was saying, but just look in his heart.

[1 : 59] Now, think about that. She was saying that what comes out of a person's mouth is no reflection of what is in his heart.

That's the exact opposite of what Jesus said. Look with me at Luke chapter 6, verse 45. Jesus said, For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

The New Living Translation says it this way, What you say flows from what is in your heart. Jesus was making the point there.

Also in Matthew chapter 12, verse 36. That what comes out of a person's mouth is a clear reflection of what is in his or hers heart.

Jesus confirms what we've been looking at in the book of Proverbs over the past seven weeks, doesn't it? Words matter. Your words matter.

[3 : 07] My words matter. Because words are powerful. That book of wisdom, Proverbs. You remember how it describes the power of our speech in life or death terms?

Look at it again from Proverbs 18, 21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. The power of the tongue. The power of our speech. The power of our words.

They can destroy. They can destroy. They can destroy us. They can destroy other people. But words can also be life-giving.

Life-encouraging. And we've looked at examples of all of that. Well, this morning I want us to conclude this study on the power of our words or the importance of our words by looking closely at the two passages from the New Testament that we've been looking at from time to time throughout this series.

Luke chapter 6 verses 43 through 45 and Matthew chapter 12 verses 36 and 37. I'm going to put it on the screen, but if you want to turn to in your Bible and just look at it, mark it.

[4 : 24] Luke chapter 6, Matthew chapter 12. Let's look first at this. Our words reveal the kind of relationship we currently have with God.

I want you to understand that. From what Jesus said, and it's going to be clear. Our words, the way we talk, it indicates what our current relationship with God is right now.

Look at Luke 6, 43 through 45. Jesus said, For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.

For each tree is known by its fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 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.

[5 : 36] Jesus often used that analogy of how a tree is known by the fruit it produces to teach an important lesson. A person is known by the fruit that he or she produces.

I want you to think about how Jesus explained that in terms of both people who do evil and people who do good.

For an example, he said twice in reference to false teachers to be aware of them because of their fruit. Look at it. Matthew 7, verse 15.

He says, Be aware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.

And then he went on in verse 20 to repeat that very same statement. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. So Jesus in teaching that Sermon on the Mount, he says you can spot a false teacher, a false prophet.

[6 : 45] You can spot someone who is lying to you. You can spot someone who is basically an evil person doing evil things by looking at the fruit of their life.

But that's also true about his people, faithful people, good people. Look in John chapter 15. Jesus in speaking to his disciples said, Abide or remain in me and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Let's think about that. We all know that a tree produces fruit according to its nature. To use what Jesus said, A fig tree produces figs.

[8 : 00] An apple tree produces apples. A grits tree produces grits. Now I just said that to see what you would do. See if you were paying attention.

But I don't understand it. Louis Grisard wrote a book, Don't Sit Under the Grits Tree with Anyone But Me. Why would he lie in the title of his book?

Anyway, you know, a tree produces fruit according to its nature. What Jesus is talking about, when he uses this word fruit, to describe what people produce, he's saying that whatever you are, you will demonstrate it by the things that are observed in your life.

It's a general term to describe a variety of things, when he's talking about a Christian now, that the Spirit of God will do and produce in our lives.

When Jesus talks about fruit, he's talking about what comes out of us. He's talking about our words. He's talking about our actions. He's talking about our character.

[9 : 21] In terms of a Christian, Paul wrote about the fruit of the Spirit, describing character qualities, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control, these kinds of things.

When Jesus was talking about it there in John chapter 15, there were such things that he said about his people being able to pray in his name and God hearing.

A fruitful life is a life that is seen in demonstrating Christian character, Christ-like character, being a person of prayer, being a person who's concerned about knowing and doing God's will and praying accordingly.

The fruit of our life would be any kind of good works that we do because we love God or we love people. We want to meet people's needs. We want to please God.

But in terms of this message, the focus of today, the fruit that a person produces includes the words that we speak.

[10 : 28] That's what I want to underline today. Jesus taught that each person produces fruit that is consistent with what's in their heart. That's another way of saying that we produce fruit consistent with who we are, who we are deep down.

When Jesus says, what comes out of our mouth originates in our heart, he's just saying, what comes out of our mouth comes from who we are, period. Who we are with no mask.

Who we are, no covering up. Who we are as God sees us. Jesus makes it clear. Your words.

My words. They are a reflection of what's in us. That's what the last part of verse 45 means in Luke 6.

For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks. I don't think, generally speaking, we believe that.

[11 : 46] Or at least we don't like to think that way, do we? Because we sometimes think about how we use careless words, I didn't mean what I said, things like that.

But what Jesus is saying here in Luke chapter 6 and in Matthew chapter 12 that we've been looking at throughout this whole series, he really means it.

And there's no other way to take it. I want you to listen to how some respected Bible teachers describe what Jesus is saying here when he says, for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Look at what Darrell Bach says. We are what we produce, especially when it comes to what we say. The mouth is a litmus test of who we are spiritually.

Look at what David Garland says. The assumption is, in what Jesus said, that the mouth is a spigot from which flows what is hidden away in the heart.

[12:52] And then John framed. We act and speak then according to our character. We follow the deepest desires of our hearts.

Look one more time. Or rather, look at one verse along this line that should also really get our attention.

It's in Matthew 12, verse 36. Jesus says, I tell you on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak.

We're going to look at that in a little bit more detail later. We'll look at that phrase, people will give an account for every careless word they speak.

The word careless here means idle. Idle words. What we would consider insignificant words.

Careless words are the things that just sort of come out.

[13:52] things that we say without thinking. Off the cuff remarks. And you might think, well, do those words really matter?

I mean, just sort of spouting off a little bit. Look at how Craig Blomberg points out why careless words are not harmless words. He says, what may seem like merely trivial or casual remarks may at times better reflect the true attitude of one's heart than more carefully chosen words.

What Jesus is saying about these careless words, and Blomberg is trying to emphasize, it's those careless, without thinking, off the cuff remarks sometimes that really shows what we're thinking, what we feel, what we really are.

This is a warning to all of us. We need to be aware that those hurtful things that we say in anger, in frustration, and then come back later on and say, oh, I didn't mean it.

Jesus is saying, you did mean it. Here's what I think he's talking about. When I get mad and I pop off, at that moment, that's what I mean.

[15:37] I may get mad at Mike and say, you're an absolute moron. And at that moment, my attitude and my heart, I am just mad at him, I want to hurt him, I want to do something to put him down.

That is what I mean at that moment in time. That's what Jesus is saying. Now, as a Christian, we're going to come to this in a moment and we're going to look at Peter as an example so you know I'm not just blowing smoke here, I'm telling you what really happens.

As a Christian, I may get mad and I may pop off to him or someone. At that moment in time, that's what I want to do. I wanted to hurt him, I wanted to hit him, I wanted to do something to him.

But when I calm down, I think to myself, why did I do that? Why did I say that?

I don't really think he's a moron, I don't really want to hurt him. And if I really do that, I'm going to go and apologize to him. I'm going to let him know that is out of character.

[16:56] It's not what I really think, but the truth is, at the moment, I did. And when you say those things, you do too. And we have to accept ownership for that stuff.

It's not just blowing smoke. Jesus is saying it matters because it indicates what we are. Careless words are not harmless words.

And that bothers me. And Jesus intends for it to bother us all. What Jesus is actually teaching in all this is that if we think we've got a problem with our mouth, we've really got a much more serious problem because we've got a problem with our heart.

The mouth only spews out that which is deeper in us. We really don't have word problems. We have heart problems, Jesus is saying. Let's go back to what we read in John chapter 15.

Look again at what Jesus told his disciples. He said, you abide in me, you remain in me. You stay united to me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

[18 : 31] I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

The only way that we can have a good heart and produce good fruit in terms of our words or our actions is if we have a real relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's what he was telling his disciples. That's really the point he's making in Luke chapter 6 and Matthew chapter 12. We're born with a sinful heart. All of us.

We're born with a sinful heart that is incapable of producing the good fruit that Jesus was talking about. I mean, that's what he says. Apart from him, we can do nothing.

The only way that our hearts can be changed is by the supernatural work of God that he does when he brings about a new birth.

[19 : 36] Jesus talked about that in his conversation with the man named Nicodemus in John chapter 3. I'd encourage you to read that. Now, if God's already done this work in us to bring about a new birth, God has regenerated us.

If God has changed our heart, if God has put his spirit in us, that's what changes us. And there will be evidence in our lives.

We will, to use these same analogies, we will produce good fruit. We'll bear good fruit. And a part of that good fruit will be good words.

And so, we are at a point now where we just need to look at ourselves. You think about your life. Do you see evidence that God has worked in you, brought about a change in you, a change of heart, that results in you bearing forth good fruit, good works, good words.

Now, let's be clear about this. Jesus was not saying that Christians will produce only good fruit and good words. That's what I was talking about a moment ago.

[21 : 00] I want you to look at the pattern of your life. Think about, think about how you really are in the big picture. People who observe you over a period of time, what do they see?

Let me ask it another way. What are your deepest desires most days? What does your speech reveal about you most of the time?

and what direction is your life heading overall? Are you making progress in developing Christian character?

Are you really growing and becoming more obviously a child of God, a follower of Jesus? Nobody lives this kind of way, produces this kind of fruit every day, all the time.

And Peter's the example that I referred to a moment ago. The apostle Peter, in case you don't know who that is, Peter was the leader of Jesus' band of disciples, apostles, the ones he commissioned to be with him.

[22 : 23] He trained them and he sent them out in the power of the Holy Spirit. And there's a lot of information about Peter in the first part of the book of Acts, how faithful he was.

He truly loved the Lord, but he also truly failed his Lord on several occasions. One of the worst examples is what's most remembered is when Jesus was arrested, was on trial, about to be executed, at a time when he really needed the support of his followers, they deserted him.

And Peter not only deserted him, but Peter denied when asked. He denied that he even knew Jesus. Three times he said, I don't know the man.

Peter's words indicated he was not a follower of Jesus. Peter's words indicated somebody who had a bad heart, but that was not what he normally was, not how he normally spoke.

But Peter, that wasn't just one day. He had other issues when he was unfaithful. Years later, he was around a group of Gentile Christians.

[23 : 51] He was coming from a Jewish background. And when he was around these Gentile Christians, he treated them just like equals, brothers and sisters. But when some Jewish Christians came to the community, he acted like he didn't know these Gentile Christians.

And the Apostle Paul saw that, and the Apostle Paul in front of everybody called him out, called him a hypocrite, and even wrote it in the book of Galatians chapter 2.

It's recorded in Scripture that the great Apostle Peter played the role of a hypocrite in the early church in one setting. Why am I saying this?

There are days when any Christian, even Peter, when their words and actions are terrible, are ungodly, people, but the overall pattern of a genuine Christian's life is that we truly do love the Lord, and we show it by the way that we live, including the way that we speak.

And so here's another question. As you look at your life, what is the overall pattern? is there evidence, consistent evidence, that the Spirit of God indwells you and is working in you, developing you, changing you?

[25 : 28] Does your speech reveal that? Does your overall character show that? not on a bad day, but the overall pattern of your life does it show that you clearly are a child of God because of the evidence, the fruit that is visible?

If you cannot see such evidence, Jesus says your heart is bad. That's the problem. And the solution is for you to ask God to change your heart, to admit that you're not His, and if you want to be, tell God that you are truly sorry for the way that you have lived and dishonored Him and disobeyed Him.

Change your mind about the way you've been living. Turn from it. Repent. Put your trust in Jesus that when He died on the cross He actually paid the penalty for your sins.

call upon Him to come into your life and be your Savior. And when you are united to Him by faith, His death for your sins is what's credited to you.

You are forgiven. You become a child of God. He will change you from the inside out if you will truly commit your life to Christ as your Savior and your Lord.

[27 : 04] Now it may be that you would say, I know that I'm a Christian. I know God's done that new work in me. I know He has changed me. And He throughout my life He's been changing me.

But right now, right now there's very little evidence. Right now the fruit that you see in my life is decayed. It's rotten.

If that's the case, I want to encourage you to just be honest with God about your failing Him.

You're not being faithful. Confess your sin. Repent. Change your mind. Turn around. Come back to Him in a renewed faith, renewed commitment to living life His way instead of your way.

Now before we close out this study of our words, we need to look at one more thing that Jesus said that we've looked at in just about every message. It comes from Matthew 12.

[28 : 08] Here's the statement. Our words will reveal what kind of relationship we will eternally have with God. Look at what Jesus said in verse 36 of Matthew 12. I tell you on the day of judgment, people will give an account for every careless word they speak.

For by your words you'll be justified. And by your words you'll be condemned. This verse is not teaching that our salvation is determined by our words.

The Bible does not teach that we can earn our salvation by doing certain things or not doing certain things. By the way we speak or not speak.

The Bible clearly teaches that salvation is by God's grace. It's undeserved. It's unearned. Our salvation is by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

That he paid the penalty for our sins when he died on the cross. Salvation is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing else. But that's not all the Bible says.

[29 : 12] The Bible clearly teaches that our works, including our words, demonstrates the reality of our faith.

And that's what Jesus is saying in this passage in Matthew 12. Listen to how the ESV study Bible explains what Jesus is saying in verses 36 and 37.

By your words you will be justified means people's words will be outward evidence of their inward character. It also says the word justified here means shown to be righteous.

Now I know a lot of people you have studied the Bible and you know that the Apostle Paul uses the word justified in his letters especially in Romans and Galatians and when he says we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ he's talking about we are declared right with God.

We're declared righteous through faith in Jesus. That is not how Jesus uses the word. Jesus uses the word to say shown to be righteous.

[30 : 30] And then the ESV study Bible goes on similarly evil people's evil words will be evidence by which they will be condemned. John MacArthur echoes this.

He says every person is judged by his words because they reveal the state of his heart. It seems that most people will readily admit I have trouble at times with my tongue but a lot of people do not understand that that is an indication of a problem with their heart with their real self.

Jesus says we struggle with our tongue because we have a problem with our heart. What comes out of our mouth reveals what is really in us.

What comes out of our mouth is a reflection of who you are deep down Jesus says. So what does your speech indicate about the condition of your heart right now?

Do you need to have your heart changed? Be honest with God. He knows. You know. If you've got a real heart problem that it's never been changed, it's just sinful, it's just selfish, it's just about the world, then admit that to God.

[32 : 07] Cry out to Him. ask Him to save you, to change you. Ask Jesus to be your Savior as you surrender your life to Him as your Lord.

And if you need to have your heart cleansed afresh as a Christian, admit that to God. The book of 1 John chapter 1 and verse 9 tells us as Christians what we need to do when we recognize that we've got a dirty heart, that we've got sin in our life.

He says if we confess our sins, He, that is God, is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

Christian, if there's something in your heart that needs to be cleansed, purified today, admit that to God, repent of that sin, come back to Him in confession.

He will forgive you. He will cleanse you. He'll give you a fresh start right now as His child. He'll fill you afresh with His Spirit, but you've got to call upon Him and mean it in order for that to happen.

[33 : 33] Let's pray again. Dear God, show us what we need to do in light of all that you have said to us in this series about the power of our words, the seriousness of our words.

Father, if there are people in this room who are not Christians, make it clear and make it clear that by Your grace, and through faith in Jesus, they can be saved, forgiven, made right with You, made a child of Yours right now.

Work, dear God, to call them to faith in Jesus now. Lord, show Christians in this room their words matter.

And if they're truly Your children with Your Spirit living in them, they will not be able to speak ungodly words or live an ungodly life without real conviction, guilt, experiencing Your discipline.

But help them to see, dear God, that they can be forgiven, the guilt can be taken away, they can be restored to real fellowship with You right now. If they will confess, seek Your forgiveness, turn from their sin, and renew their commitment to Jesus as Lord of their life.

[35 : 10] Show us all what to do, how to respond, help us to do it. And then in an attitude of prayer, you just do it. Do what the Lord is telling you to do. I'll be here at the front, be happy to pray with you, talk with you, you let me know.

Let's just be in an attitude of prayer and respond to the Lord as He speaks.