

Theological Equipping Class

A Theology of our Speech

August 2, 2026

The Significance of our Speech

- *For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. (James 3:2)*
- *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. (Luke 6:45)*
- What comes out is what is already within
- Why are our words so important?
 - Creation
 - Fall
 - Redemption
 - Consummation

Words about our Words

- *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend... (Ps 15:1-3)*
- *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. (Proverbs 6:16-19)*
- *The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near. (Proverbs 10:14)*
- *The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool. When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense. (Proverbs 10:18-21)*
- *Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered. (Proverbs 11:12-13)*

- *Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit. There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. (Proverbs 12:17–19)*
- *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. (Proverbs 15:1–2)*
- *A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (Proverbs 15:4)*
- *A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends. (Proverbs 16:27–28)*
- *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. (Proverbs 17:9)*
- *Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. (Proverbs 17:27–28)*
- *A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape. (Proverbs 19:5)*
- *It is a snare to say rashly, “It is holy,” and to reflect only after making vows. (Proverbs 20:25)*
- *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. (Proverbs 18:21)*
- *Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears. Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “I am only joking!” For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart. Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart; when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart; though his hatred be covered with deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly. (Proverbs 26:17–26)*
- *Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:5–6)*
- *Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Proverbs 31:8–9)*
- *And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men... (Isaiah 29:13)*

- *For the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink. As for the scoundrel—his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right. But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands. (Isaiah 32:6–8)*
- *They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, declares the LORD. Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: “Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people? Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him. (Jeremiah 9:3–8)*
- *These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD. (Zechariah 8:16–17)*
- *Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (Matthew 12:33–37)*
- *But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. (Matt 15:18–20)*
- *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. (Luke 6:45)*
- *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (Romans 1:28–31)*
- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)*
- *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31–32)*

- *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:4)*
- *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. (Colossians 3:8)*
- *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (Col 3:9–10)*
- *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)*
- *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:6)*
- *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger... (James 1:19)*
- *If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. (James 1:26)*
- *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. (James 3:1–12)*
- **Isaiah's response**
 - *And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5)*
- **Thermometer: a gauge of our health**
 - The mouth is a theological indicator of the heart, worship, obedience, and wisdom. What comes out of the mouth tells us something about what lives in the heart.

- *it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person. (Matthew 15:11)*

- Words are never just words.

Cursing/coarse joking

- cacology from the Greek kakos meaning bad and logos meaning words
- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)*
- *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:4)*
- *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. (Colossians 3:8)*

- Vulgarity

- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)*
- *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:4)*
- *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isaiah 64:6)*

- Obscenity

- *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:3–4)*
- *Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt and lusted after her lovers there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses. Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom and pressed your young breasts. (Ezekiel 23:19–21)*
- *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ... (Philippians 3:8)*
- *I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! (Galatians 5:12)*

- So what is happening here? Consider the context.
 - severe words for severe situations
 - Examples: police officer, yelling at your kids, concealed weapon
- How to view exceptions and rules

Gossip and Slander

- *You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.* (Leviticus 19:16)
- *Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.* (Psalm 101:5)
- *Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.* (Proverbs 11:12-13)
- *A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.* (Proverbs 16:27-28)
- *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.* (Proverbs 17:9)
- *A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul. The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.* (Proverbs 18:6-8)
- *Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babblers.* (Proverbs 20:19)
- *Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret, lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.* (Proverbs 25:9-10)
- *They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents...* (Romans 1:29-30)
- *For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.* (2 Corinthians 12:20)
- *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* (Ephesians 4:31)

- *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (1 Peter 2:1)*
- *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. (James 4:11)*
- What's the difference between slander and gossip? Gossip is a general category for speech about another person whereas slander is explicitly defined as false speech.
- "Negative speech about another person to someone that is neither part of the problem nor the solution."
- Exceptions?
 - Exceptions don't negate the rule
 - *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth... (2 Timothy 2:24-25)*
- "Resisting Gossip" by Matthew Mitchell.

Lies

- *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)*
- *You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. (Exodus 23:1)*
- *Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. (Proverbs 4:24)*
- *a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. (Proverbs 6:19)*
- *A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies. (Proverbs 14:5)*
- *A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful. (Proverbs 14:25)*
- *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)*
- *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices... (Col 3:9)*

- Put off the old self
 - *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Ephesians 2:1–3)*
 - *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)*
- Exceptions?
- Christians should be known for speaking the truth in love
 - Prohibition of oaths and swearing

Putting off and on

- *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)*
- *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:17–24)*
- *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (Ephesians 4:28)*
- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)*
- *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)*
- *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (Colossians 3:9–10)*

Reading the Text Deeply

- Baptist Catechism of 1695
 - Q. Which is the ninth commandment?
A. The ninth commandment is, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (Ex. 20:16)
 - Q. What is required in the ninth commandment?
A. The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, (Zech. 8:16) and of our own neighbor’s good name (3 John 12), especially in witness-bearing. (Prov. 14:5, 25)
 - Q. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?
A. The ninth commandment forbids whatsoever is prejudicial to the truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbor’s good name. (Lev. 19:16; 1 Sam. 17:28; Psalms 15:3)
- Westminster Catechism
 - “The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful or equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of the truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattering, vainglorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any; endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt, fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report, and practicing, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.” (Westminster Catechism)
- Enjoined to speak the truth!
 - *If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity...* (Leviticus 5:1)

Hasty words

- *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. (Proverbs 10:19)*
- *Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. (Proverbs 17:27)*
- *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly. (Proverbs 12:23)*
- *Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. (Proverbs 13:3)*
- *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. (Proverbs 15:28)*
- *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger... (James 1:19)*

The Positive Use of Words

- *Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips. (Proverbs 24:26)*
- *The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. (Proverbs 10:11)*
- *On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense. (Proverbs 10:13)*
- *Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. (Proverbs 12:25)*
- *Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right. (Proverbs 16:13)*
- *To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is! (Proverbs 15:23)*
- *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reproof to a listening ear. (Proverbs 25:11–12)*
- *With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. (Proverbs 25:15)*
- *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Proverbs 31:26)*

What and how then should we speak?

- *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16–17)*
- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)*
- *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:6)*
- *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13)*
- Put off destructive speech | put on constructive speech
- Learning how to speak as a Christian