

How to Be an Example in Word

by Don Currin

The sermon teaches how to exemplify Christ through mindful and responsible speech.

Duration: 32:17

Scripture: Matthew 12:36

Topics: "Example"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the potential for revival in the hearts of believers. They express concern that often, when gathering together for revival, people unintentionally hinder the work of God's Spirit. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being an example in word, using the Bible as the foundation for our messages and avoiding excessive speech that does not honor the Spirit. They also encourage listeners to be patient with those who may not yet appreciate revival, allowing them to grow in grace. The sermon is based on 1 Timothy 4:12 and highlights the need to be an example in word, conversation, charity, spirit, faith, and purity.

Transcript

I'd like you to take your Bibles this afternoon, please, and turn to 1 Timothy chapter 4. 1 Timothy in chapter 4. I've had the opportunity to be a part of the Flames of Freedom rally, this is my third one, and be a part of the Canadian Revival Fellowship as an affiliate team member, and to have the joy of being a part of the conferences that have been appointed by this organization. But I fear many times that as we assemble ourselves together expecting God to do a work of revival individually and collectively in the hearts of his people, that oftentimes we abort the potential of God's Spirit bringing about that work of his presence. And we do it by this means, and that is through excessive talking and speaking things that really don't honor the Spirit.

We all have a camaraderie that we all deeply appreciate revival. But we must be very careful that we're not critical of those who right now don't appreciate it, and give them an opportunity to grow in grace and God to work on their behalf and turn their hearts. Today what I'd like to do is to share with you something that I'm in the process of engrafting in my spirit, and that is the exercise of being an example in word.

I want you to look with me at one verse of scripture here in 1 Timothy 4, verse 12. We know that all those specific portions of God's word is addressed to various parties, yet we also know that the scripture teaches that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. It's relevant to every person, regardless of what class or group or race that we're a part of.

Although this is written to youth, yet I believe it's something that is a very timely message that is applicable to each one of us as members of the body of Christ. 1 Timothy 4, verse 12, Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation or lifestyle, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word.

Some months ago I flew into Miami, Florida, and upon arriving at the church, the pastor shared with me how a young lady in preparation for the revival crusade had gone on a spiritual quarantine of silence. For one week she determined that she would not speak unless someone asked her a question or unless the occasion demanded an answer or some type of response. On Sunday morning, as we began that revival crusade, the pastor asked this young lady to come and share what she had learned through that experience.

Among other things, she said, If there's one thing that I have learned this week during this quarantine of silence, it's how addicted I am to excessive speech. How addicted I am to excessive speech. This afternoon I'd like to share with you just some principles on how to be an example in word.

Let me begin by encouraging you to take your Bibles this afternoon, because one of the best ways of safeguarding ourselves as preachers is to saturate our messages with God's word. It's not our opinion. It's not our views on certain topics, but rather it's God's word, and that's the only thing that's going to produce remaining fruit and certainly a life that glorifies the Lord Jesus.

I want you to turn your Bibles with me, if you would, beginning in Matthew 12. Matthew and chapter number 12. The first step in being an example in word is learn to be responsible for every word that you speak.

Learning to be responsible for every word that you express. A great need in our hour is the need to develop an accountability for our words. Jesus said in Matthew 12 and verse 36, But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.

I want to ask you a question. Do you really believe that? Do you believe that every word that you utter, you're going to give an account thereof in the day of judgment? It is interesting to know what the word idle here means. It means without eternal value.

Every word that does not affect eternity, hath bearing upon the kingdom of Christ, does not ultimately give glory to God, we will give an account thereof in the day of judgment. Some months ago, I was spending some time with a good friend of mine, and while in the midst of a recreational exercise, a certain preacher's name came up. And I volunteered my thoughts, and my thoughts were rather critical.

And I shared with him, I said, Well, I'll tell you one thing right now. I'll not go any further in what I really feel in my heart about this brother. Brother, I just wanted you to know that one of these days, he's going to have to give an account to God.

And when I said that, this friend of mine looked at me and he says, And so will we, we'll have to give an account for God for what we just said. Everything that we speak, we're going to give an account for in the day of judgment. Every idle word.

Someone has said that silence teaches us to speak. One of the old Puritans said, And I have often repented of excessive words, but never of silence. There's a second principle in being an example in word, and that is learning to be slow to speak.

Once again, if I could encourage you to use your Bibles, turn with me to the Epistle of Revival, James. And look with me at James chapter number one. James in chapter one, verse number 19.

Wherefore, he says, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Slow to speak.

You know, brethren, maybe I'm not a very good instrument to discern those that are spiritual from those who may be somewhat despondent in their walk with the Lord. But in my limited understanding and in my growth process, I think I'm right in this. In all the scores of people that I've met across North America, those that I sense are really spiritually minded are deliberate in their conversation.

They don't say anything unless they've got something to say. They don't volunteer information. They don't express opinions unless it seems they've allowed those words to pass the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit.

Let me ask you, before you utter a word, do you allow it to be scrutinized under the tutorship of the Holy Ghost? Or do you speak excessively? You know, that's what the sin of clamor is. It's speaking excessively with no thought of what we're saying. Being an example in word means being slow to speak.

You'll also find in James 3, verse 6, the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, the effects of it. So that the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body and seteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell. Well, maybe there's some things that I could just share with you in passing that I'm, once again, cultivating in my life that is producing more of a slowness of speech when I'm asked a question.

First of all, ask yourself the question, will what I'm about to say glorify God? You'll want to put down 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, even talking, make sure that it glorifies God. Number two, does it pass the scrutiny of God's Spirit? Psalms 119, excuse me, 141, verse 3. David says, set a watch on my mouth, O God, guard the door of my lips.

Have we cultivated that exercise in our life of allowing the Spirit of God to test our words before we speak? And then another question to ask, could what I'm about to say, could it be misunderstood? Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, verse 37, let your conversation be yea-yea or nay-nay, for whatever cometh more than these cometh of evil or the evil one. A third principle in being an example in word is let your words be few. Let your words be few.

Turn with me, if you would, to Proverbs chapter number 17. Proverbs chapter 17, verse 27. He that hath knowledge spareth his words.

And a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise. And he that shut up his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

It's like the modern-day proverb, it's better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you're stupid than to open your mouth and leave no room for doubt. Let your words be few. You know, it's amazing to me as you study the life of our Lord, and of course that is the very essence of this conference, is that we might pattern our lives, our homes, our lips, everything about us after the Lord Jesus.

But in contemplating the life of Christ, I find that Jesus was very choice in his words. And he used words very discreetly. One thing that stands out is his prayers were few, publicly.

I believe he spent much time in secret prayer. But he didn't waste words when he prayed. He didn't waste words when he preached.

And he did not waste words when he counseled people. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 10 and verse 19, in the multitude of words there won't not sin. In essence, what that means is the more you talk, the more prone you are to sin with your lips.

Have you ever been talking to someone before and you just talk excessively? And sometimes the reason we talk so excessively is because we fear man, and we feel like we have to keep talking until we see in their eyes or face an approving of what we say that gives us a sense that they're agreeing with us so that we can stop talking. So we speak excessively, and we end up saying something that we should not. And the individual that we're talking to, we are rather shocked that it came forth from our lips because we can see it on their expression.

And maybe in our minds, or sometimes even openly in their presence, we say, I can't believe I said that. Do you know that when you're shocked over something that you speak that you should not, it's an indication that you're full of self-love? Well, that's the very idea. I never thought I had the capacity of sharing such a thing in the presence of someone else.

But once again, it comes through excessive speech. Let your words be few. I remember the story of praying Hyde when they called him to meet with J. Wilbur Chapman.

And Chapman was introduced to him, and Mr. Hyde and Chapman went to their knees in prayer. And Chapman determined he would never pray until he heard Hyde pray. They began to pray, and the spirit of prayer and John Hyde on the other side of the room just remained in silence for 20 minutes.

And all of a sudden, all he said was, Oh, God. Another ten minutes lapsed. Once again, it was, Oh, God, but yet the spirit of intensity had increased.

And still another five minutes. And then he prayed. A few short sentences in prayer arose from his knees and left the room, and J. Wilbur Chapman never saw praying Hyde from that day forward.

But that night when he stepped into the pulpit, the anointing of God was so real and so intense as he preached the word many people came into the kingdom of Christ. A few words. I fear that sometimes our prayers, we catch up for our lack of secret prayer by praying excessively in the presence of others.

Jesus was one of few words. Number four, another principle to consider, as I have and am still considering, is be informed before you speak about a person or about a situation. Be thoroughly informed.

Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 13. Very convenient. Look at verse number 13.

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and a shame unto him. I feel as if we need a little Paul Harvey theology these days. I'd like to get the rest of the story.

And may I say to you this afternoon that when we hear certain things about certain brethren or certain circumstances, remember, friend, at that moment because you're so caught up in the emotion of this person that is sharing this information with you, it is the natural tendency of your flesh to agree with them. But there's always another side to the story. And you're only getting a partial view.

This summer I've had the opportunity to serve as interim pastor in our church in Gainesville, Georgia. What a learning experience. Sometimes folks will come and express their disillusionment with the way things are going and can be somewhat critical and brutal in their speech about certain parties.

But in the process of sharing this in the back of my mind, I'm having to constantly remind myself that there are other parties involved and there's probably another side to the story. And there always is. Be thoroughly informed before you speak.

You'll also want to put down Proverbs 26, verse 4. I don't know what it is about us, but it seems sometimes that we have a hard time saying to the person that asks us a question about someone or asking us to vocalize our opinion about a circumstance, we have a difficult time saying, I don't know. Why is that? Could it be because of our pride? Because we want people to think that we're self-omniscient. We're all knowing.

I've got an answer for everything. What is wrong with saying to an individual, Brother, I'll just be honest with you, I don't have a word from the Lord on that. And I don't have the liberty to comment.

Well, there's nothing wrong with it. It's sad to say our pride won't let us do that. We'd much rather go ahead and express our opinion.

Well, there's a fifth principle in being an example in word, and that is base your answers on Scripture. Base your answers on God's word. Proverbs 22, verse 17.

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee. They shall wither befitted in thy lips, that thy trust may be in the Lord.

I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels, God says, and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that sinned unto thee. Folks, these days I have a real difficult time, I suppose, with the modern day Christian psychology movement.

I believe there's a lot of good people in that movement. I believe a lot of good men have good things to say. But I believe we must be extremely careful that we don't allow that counsel to be a substitute for God's word.

Because as much counsel as I have dispersed with my opinion laced in it, I have found that it does not bear fruit. If it bears any fruit at all, it's only temporary. It's spurious.

But it does not last. It will not persevere in the hearts of God's people. Learn, when you answer a matter, to make sure that every word is predicated upon the inspired volume, God's truth.

For that is the only thing that will preserve the results for the glory of our Christ. Number six. The sixth principle that I would mention in passing would be learn to prepare a wise answer before you speak.

Learn to prepare a wise answer. Proverbs 16. And verse number one.

God says, The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. You'll also notice in verse number 23 of the same chapter. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips.

Why is it that we feel like that we have to talk? What's wrong with learning to develop a silent spirit, a quiet spirit, in the sight of God and in the presence of others? Many times we fear, man, that we have to engage in conversation. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. I find sometimes we can say more by just being silent.

Prepare a wise answer. There are certain ingredients in preparing a wise answer. First of all, learn to consult your authorities before you speak about a matter.

Learn to consult your authorities. Could it be this afternoon that for some of us we can't consult our spiritual authorities because they're the object of our criticism? And how we might pride ourselves that we really don't have a problem with anyone in the church, but yet we have a very sorry disposition towards certain people that are in positions of authority over us as God's watchmen who watch for our souls. Learn to consult your shepherd.

Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 17. Obey them which have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls as they must give an account. A second step in preparing a wise answer would be learn to speak to wise men.

Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. You find the principle in Proverbs 24 and verse number 6, as well as Proverbs 11 and verse 14.

In the multitude of counselors there is what? Safety. Safety. And then a third thing in preparing a wise answer is before you share something of a weighty matter in regard to something that's asked you, learn to consult your mate.

For women this is something that's very, very needful, as they must be under the authority of their husbands to listen to their husbands, to consult their husbands as God's under-shepherds, the priests of the home. But even us men, we need to learn to value and esteem and to consult our wives. But they have a different perspective on things and it could indeed save us a lot of hardship in our ministry as well as our own personal lives if we would do so.

Learn to prepare wise answers. Number seven. Know what is appropriate when you speak.

Ask the Lord in your heart if someone is asking you something. Lord, what is the most timely, appropriate thing that I could say to them? Sometimes the most appropriate thing that we can express to someone else about a matter or a person is once again silence. Learning to just be quiet before the Lord.

But sometimes we need some help. Let me give you the reference. Proverbs 25, verse 11.

Proverbs 25, verse 11. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovewer upon an obedient ear.

Fitly spoken words. How precious they are. What a sweet-smelling savor in the nostrils of our God.

Once again, if I could give you some helps in knowing what is appropriate. First of all, have you asked God before you give an answer? Have you consulted the wisdom of the Lord? You know, sometimes we say, well, you know, that's rather unnecessary, isn't it, Brother Curran? Why should you even mention that? Certainly we consult the Lord, but do we really? There are certain things oftentimes that we have

seemingly a handle on, at least in our own eyes, that we don't really feel like we need to consult the Lord on. I remember some years ago being in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with a gentleman, Dale Faisonfeld, Jr., and we were sitting there at the table, and I had a young man that I was apprenticing at the time who was sitting there with us.

And before we started our conversation, Dale said to me, he said, Don, where is John spiritually? He said, well, anything that we discuss today would be detrimental to his spiritual life. What a wise thought to think that anything, while it may be very harmless to us, it may be very injurious to this brother in Christ. Know what is appropriate.

First of all, have you asked God? Secondly, have you consulted your authority once again? The authorities above you before you express your view. And then finally, why did they say what they said to me? Sometimes I'm in churches and I'll have a layman or someone in the church come and say, Brother Curran, what do you think about this particular theological issue? Or what's your opinion in regard to the philosophy of local church ministry in this area? And I've learned to say, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, well, Brother, what does your pastor say? Because you see, the minute that I share my view, if my view coincides with his, then he's going to use it against me in the presence of others to discredit his pastor. Learn to prepare wise answers by learning to know what is appropriate.

And then number eight. Learn to speak with grace in your conversation. Learn to speak with grace in your speech.

Colossians chapter four and verse number six. You'll also want to put down 1 Samuel 3 and verse 19. God never allowed Samuel's words to fall to the ground.

His words were waiting. They penetrated. They created a hunger and a thirst.

I remember some years ago when I was in Bible school, I had a young man from a roommate that deeply was devoted to the Lord Jesus. And one day, I came in from a weekend of meetings and I was standing in the mail room with this brother. And I'd heard a joke from the previous weekend of being around some men in the church that I thought was real funny.

Now, it was not a foul joke or a sensual joke. It seemingly was harmless in my eyes, but it was something that made light of something in God's Word, a particular character in the Bible. And as I shared this with him, his response to my joke was one of turning away with seemingly a grief of spirit.

He didn't laugh. He didn't smirk. There was not one smile on his face.

And I could tell it offended him. So, the bell rung at that moment. I was supposed to go to class, and I couldn't go because God had convicted me through this brother's reaction to my story.

And he left the mail room and started back to the dorm. And I went out in the back of the mail room and I saw him at a distance and I called for him to wait up. And he stopped and waited for me to run up into his presence.

And I said, Dave, I could tell that that joke I just shared a moment ago, that really bothered you, didn't it? And he said, Yes, Brother Don, it did. And I said, Well, if you don't mind, tell me what it was about that joke that disturbed you. And he just stood there for about ten minutes of silence as if he was pondering that question to get the most appropriate word.

The silence was bad enough for God was using it to intensify the conviction. And finally he looked at me and he says, Brother Don, I've never found it easy to joke about eternal things. And since then, friend, neither have I. I don't know if it was his words so much as it was just the silence that came as he waited before the Lord for the word to express.

That's letting your conversation being seasoned with salt. Silence as well as speaking words that are few, that are weighty, that are convicting. Listen, someone has defined the will of God or the grace of God as God giving us the desire to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And should not our speech do that when we speak to others to create a thirst, to provoke conviction so as to make us live godly and holy for Christ. People, I believe this afternoon that we've not been called to happiness, but holiness. Beware of any salvation that makes you happy to the exclusion of holy.

I believe a person who has been a recipient of genuine conversion in Christ will speak in such a way to at least express some interruption in his conversation when he speaks those words that are not becoming to the character and the likeness of our Lord Jesus. Just some practical thoughts on how to be an example in word. I pray these days that we all might corporately exercise ourselves in being an example in word lest we abort the potential of what God wants to do in this conference.

Let's pray together. Father, we confess with a Puritan that while many times we've not had to repent of silence, we have had to repent of excessive words. Enable us, Lord, to let our conversation be choice, ordered by you, that, Lord, our words, fitly spoken, might be like apples of gold and pictures of silver.

Words that would minister grace to the hearers and impart a desire within the lives of others that would grant them passion to be more like our Lord Jesus. Lord, give us a revival specifically in our tongue. Especially us preachers, Lord, that are so addicted to excessive words.

May we learn to let our words be few and develop a meek and a quiet spirit before our God, which, Lord, you've expressed is of great price. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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