

# A Word Fitly Spoken: The Wisdom of Communication

## Kicking It Off

If you had to describe what "being part of a family" means in three words, what words would you choose?

## Read

Proverbs 25:11

## Discussion Questions

### 1. The Heart Behind the Words

**Matthew 12:34, Luke 6:45, Psalm 139:23-24**

Communication is not first a technique issue but a heart issue.

- When your speech wounds, exaggerates, manipulates, withdraws, or becomes defensive, what might that reveal about what is shaping your heart in that moment?
- What do you think tends to influence speech most strongly: pride, desire for approval, comfort, fear, control, ambition, or something else?
- How would your communication change if Christ were consciously governing that moment?

### 2. Grace and Discipline Working Together

**1 Timothy 4:7-8, 15, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Philippians 2:12-13**

The life of a worshipper of Christ is where God's gracious provision (a new heart, the Holy Spirit, reconciliation with God, no longer slaves to sin) and the believer's faithful pursuit (training, discipline, sanctification, perseverance) converge.

- In daily life, is there a tendency to drift toward passivity (“God will fix this”) or toward self-reliance (“I just need to try harder”)?
- What does Holy Spirit-empowered eUort look like in everyday conversations, in your opinion?

### **3. Clarity Before Speech**

#### **1 Corinthians 14:8, Proverbs 15:28, Proverbs 16:23, Proverbs 18:2**

Clear speech begins with a settled heart and thoughtful preparation and consideration.

- Think of a recent diUicult or tense conversation that you’ve had, was there clarity about what was actually being communicated?
- Was it clear to you whether the words expressed were a fact, a feeling, an assumption, or a conclusion?
- What practical steps could help increase your clarity before speaking?

### **4. Intentional Listening and Discernment**

#### **James 1:19, Proverbs 18:13, Proverbs 20:5**

Scripture calls believers to be quick to hear and slow to speak.

- When engaged in challenging conversations, are you listening primarily for understanding or for preparing a response?
- What fears, insecurities, or desires make it diUicult for you to truly listen deeply to whomever is speaking to you?
- How might your relationships change if those you speak to consistently felt deeply understood?

## 5. Living What Is Spoken

**James 1:22, Titus 1:16, 1 John 3:18, Philippians 1:27**

Credibility in your life grows when your words and actions align.

- Are there areas in your life where your speech and your behavior do not fully match?
- How do you think serious misalignment between speech and behavior would impact the authority and trust in your relationships?
- What would it look like this week to more intentionally align your actions with your spoken convictions? How do you think this would change your week?

## 6. Owning Words with Humility

**Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 9:8–9, Ephesians 4:29**

Wisdom listens to correction and takes responsibility for speech.

- When you corrected or misunderstood, what is your first internal reaction: defensiveness, justification, humility, gratitude, or something else?
- Why does that reaction surface, do you think?
- How might families, friendships, and church unity strengthen if individuals took responsibility for unclear words quickly and humbly?

## Sermon Notes

**Proverbs 25:11** *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*

### **Biblical Communication**

Poor communication causes unnecessary problems. It creates tension, misunderstanding, and can cause damage. I have come to believe that communication is not a minor issue in our lives, it is often the central issue that either strengthens or fractures everything around us.

Independent studies confirm this concern about poor communication. A 2010 study published in the *Journal of Family Psychology* found that negative communication patterns before marriage are significantly associated with future divorce. I would like to say that this is obvious, but when research identifies communication as one of the strongest predictors of marital breakdown, it deserves serious attention. The way couples speak to one another, before vows are exchanged, often sets the trajectory for the success or failure of their marriage.

Communication also directly affects mental and physical health. In 2016, the *Journal of Communication Disorders* reported that individuals who struggle with communication are significantly more likely to experience loneliness, smaller social networks, reduced social participation, and lower perceived support. These factors correlate with poorer mental and physical health outcomes. Similarly, reports from the U.S. Surgeon General have linked social disconnection, often rooted in poor communication, with increased risk of depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, and even premature mortality.

Poor communication impacts the workplace as well. The Axios HQ “State of Essential Workplace Communications” report estimates that ineffective communication costs U.S. businesses over \$2 trillion annually. Unclear instructions, duplicated work, unnecessary meetings, misalignment between teams, and time spent correcting preventable mistakes all compound into massive inefficiency due to poor communication. In every arena of life, communication is not a minor issue, it is foundational.

So, to start, I think the first thing we need to understand about biblical communication is this: the words we speak will always follow the condition of our character. Speech does not exist in isolation; it flows from the heart. Before we begin refining how we

communicate, we must first examine who or what rules our heart. Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:34 Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. This means that our words are not random, our words are revealing, they expose what fills us, they expose what the content of our heart is.

So, the deeper question is not, “How can I speak or communicate better?” The deeper question we should all consider is, “Who or what sits on the throne of my heart?”

- Is it pride?
- Is it the approval of men?
- Is it comfort?
- Is it the pursuit of wealth?
- Or is it Christ?

Scripture repeatedly calls believers to examine themselves, not to create insecurity, but to cultivate alignment with our Lord. Jesus also says in Matthew that we recognize a tree by its fruit. Please understand, our speech is fruit. If our speech consistently wounds, distorts, exaggerates, or manipulates, that is not merely a communication issue, that is a heart issue.

That is why our position in Christ matters. Before we train our tongue, we must be sure it is Jesus who rules our life, it has to be Jesus that is on the throne of our hearts. Those who love Him, obey Him. Those who belong to Him walk by the Spirit. Those who are in Christ are being transformed by the renewing of their minds. Union with Christ restores the heart. The Holy Spirit empowers obedience. And from a restored heart flows reordered speech. Biblical communication is not technique first; it is transformation first. When the heart is anchored in Christ and aligned with God the Father, clarity and stability begin to show up in our words.

Relationship with Christ is the beginning of this conversation about communication, not the end. Abiding in Him establishes our identity and anchors our heart, but Scripture consistently calls believers to move beyond simply knowing who they are in Christ into a life of walking in a manner worthy of our calling. Being in Christ changes who we are; discipline and training shape how we live. The New Testament does not assume maturity develops automatically; it commands practice, and discipline, and the pursuit of growth. If our hearts are rightly rooted in Jesus, then we are responsible to cultivate excellence in

righteousness through continual obedience. God's grace is what makes transformation possible. Practice is what makes transformation visible, and that includes how we speak.

**1 Timothy 4:15, Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.** The **things** Timothy is to immerse himself in are listed in the preceding verses, and Timothy is to set an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity for fellow believers. He is also to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching. Paul commanded Timothy to immerse himself in godly character and godly practices so that his spiritual advancement becomes observable and exemplary to those around him.

**1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.** In this scripture, using athletic imagery, Paul describes the kind of intentional, repeated self-denial that characterizes serious training. His point is not that being in relationship with Christ is insufficient, nor that salvation is earned through effort. Rather, because he belongs to Christ and proclaims a gospel that calls others to endurance and obedience, he must actively train himself in those disciplines, kind of practice what he's preaching. Spiritual maturity does not develop passively. It requires deliberate practice, repeated self-control over desires, and ongoing mastery over impulses that could otherwise undermine his calling. His self-discipline, therefore, is not a substitute for grace but a response to receiving grace. It is the lived expression of integrity and perseverance in the race he is running.

**Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.** The Greek word that translated "trained" comes from disciplined exercise, conveying the idea of repeated use of discernment over time. Spiritual maturity, therefore, is not automatic for the believer. It is not produced merely by exposure to truth; maturity is produced by the consistent application of truth. The mature believer develops discernment through ongoing engagement, testing, and obedience. This verse teaches that growth in wisdom and moral clarity comes through practiced responsiveness to God's Word. Discernment is strengthened in the same way that muscles are strengthened: by use. The ability to distinguish good from evil is cultivated and formed through repetition, not passive familiarity or intellectual knowledge.

Grace changes the heart.

Practice and discipline shape the habits.

So, when **Proverbs 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver**, the beauty of the gold and silver arrangement is not accidental. It is the fruit of a heart that belongs to Christ and a tongue that has been trained in righteousness.

Now, I want this section to be very clear, Christians do not practice skills to earn standing with God, Christians practice them because they belong to God. Training increases usefulness, it increases fruitfulness, and it equips us to glorify God more fully in this fallen world. Our discipline does not earn us favor with God, but it does increase our usefulness in His hands. As we grow in maturity, clarity, and self-control, we become more skillful instruments for His purposes. Training does not secure our salvation; it strengthens our stewardship. It enables us to represent Christ more faithfully, to love more wisely, and to speak in ways that build rather than destroy.

God's word speaks directly to this. **1 Timothy 4:7b discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;**

And allow me to address any biblical tension that is present here.

On one side, we have what our God provides:

- Reconciliation through Christ.
- A new nature for those that profess faith in Christ.
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- The renewing of our minds by His truth.
- Freedom from the dominion of sin.

On the other side, we have what we pursue in response to God:

- Training.
- Discipline.
- Perseverance.
- Sanctification.

Yes, there is tension here, but tension is not contradiction, it is design. And personally, I am not uncomfortable admitting that I do not fully comprehend the complete plan of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God with my finite and fallen mind. In fact, it would be strange if I could. An infinite God would naturally construct a plan that stretches beyond the full grasp of His creation. Scripture calls us to understand truth with childlike trust, not with exhaustive comprehension. We do not need to dissolve every tension in order to obey what God has clearly revealed.

This tension is not confusion either, it's structure. The same Paul who says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," also says, "I discipline my body." The same Spirit who produces fruit also commands effort. Sanctification is not achieved through apathy or being passive, it is Holy Spirit-empowered exertion by believers in Christ.

The point is, we will not become excellent communicators by accident; we will not speak words of life simply because we want or intend to. The Holy Spirit supplies power, and we are called to pursue and participate. God transforms the heart, and we train the tongue. Our efforts do not compete with God's sovereignty; they operate within and underneath His sovereignty. Our trials, pursuits and efforts are the means He uses to mature our faith and sanctify our walk. And because this is true, communication is not merely a personality trait or a gifting, it is a discipline. It is something that can be trained, refined, strengthened, and shaped.

Which brings us to the question, what does training for communication look like? Let me give you six ways Scripture teaches us to practice communication in righteousness.

### **1. Clarity Before Speech**

Clarity Before Speech means knowing what you mean and what you feel about something before you open your mouth. Clear communication does not begin with words; it begins in the heart and the mind. If you do not know exactly what you are trying to say, the listener never will. Before engaging in conversation, we should ask ourselves: What am I actually trying to convey? Is this a fact, an opinion, a feeling, or a conclusion? What do I want the other person to understand or take from this

conversation? Sorting our thoughts, assumptions, and intent prevents us from reacting impulsively or defaulting to rehearsed or prepared responses. It forces us to slow down and consider how God would have us respond in this situation. When thought is disordered, speech becomes confusing, and confusion is never neutral, we don't worship a God of confusion. Unclear communication can lead to real harm, just as an unclear trumpet leaves soldiers unprepared for battle. God expects His children to know what they mean before they speak.

Jesus modeled this kind of clarity. He never thought out loud or spoke from emotional impulse. He spoke from a settled identity and a clear sense of purpose. He knew who He was, why He was here, and what He was doing. He did not adjust His message to gain approval, and even under pressure His answers were direct rather than reactive. His clarity flowed from alignment with the Father. In the same way, clear speech in our lives flows from a settled heart. When our identity is anchored in Christ and our inner world is ordered before God, our words offer clarity instead of confusion. Clear speech is not a personality trait; it is the fruit of a heart that has been resolved before it ever begins to speak.

## 2. Speak with Precision

Excellent communicators choose words carefully, not casually. They avoid vague language when precision matters. They carefully distinguish between similar words such as concerned and afraid, or frustrated and angry. They do not rely on tone, implication, or volume to carry meaning. Words are tools, and sloppy tools produce sloppy outcomes. Scripture treats speech as carrying moral weight, knowing that careless words can cause real damage to the listener. ***Proverbs 12:18 There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing.*** The contrast between careless words and speaking with precision is clear; careless words cause injury, wise words heal injuries. We are told to speak words that build up and fit the moment, and we should know that careless language can wound, confuse, or mislead. God values accuracy over impressiveness. Speaking with precision is not coldness; it is an act of love because it protects the other person from misunderstanding. Jesus modeled remarkable precision in His speech. He answered traps without over-answering. He refused exaggeration and avoided vague language. When necessary, He spoke with exactness that could not be twisted. At times He used parables to reveal truth to the humble and conceal it from the hostile, demonstrating control over both clarity and concealment. He did not speak to sound kind, clever, or impressive, He spoke to be true. Precision protects truth from manipulation, and it protects relationships from confusion. When we speak with precision, we honor both God and the person who is listening.

### 3. Intentional Listening

Intentional listening is the discipline of seeking understanding before asserting yourself. It means refusing to treat conversation as a contest or a waiting room for your own opinion. Listening is not simply remaining silent while preparing a rebuttal, it is an active pursuit of clarity. Clear communicators listen to understand, not to win. They reflect back what they heard to confirm accuracy. They pay attention to what is not being said as much as what is being said. Many communication failures occur because one person answers a question that the other didn't ask. Scripture treats listening before speaking, very seriously. **James 1:19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;. Proverbs 18:13 He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.** Listening, in its many forms, is not weakness or submissiveness, but rather it is wisdom in action.

Intentional listening also requires discernment. **Proverbs 20:5** describes counsel as deep water that a man of understanding draws out. That kind of listening doesn't skim the surface. It asks clarifying questions. It looks beneath words to motives, fears, pride, or faith. It listens in silence, allowing the speaker room for self-discovery.

Jesus modeled this type of listening repeatedly. Even when the need seemed obvious, He asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He addressed the heart issue, not merely the stated problem. He never answered the wrong question because He listened beneath the question. In the same way, intentional listening protects us from reacting impulsively and helps us respond to what truly needs attention or needs to be healed.

### 4. Match the Moment

Match the Moment means recognizing that truth must be delivered with discernment and love. The same words can be wise or foolish depending on timing, setting, relationship, and readiness. Scripture advises us of these realities, **Proverbs 25:11 Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances, which emphasizes that beauty is in timing as well as content. Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.** Strong communicators understand that truth alone is not the only variable in excellent communication, context and timing also matter.

**Ecclesiastes 3:7** reminds us that there is a time to speak and a time to remain silent. Those that love Jesus are commanded to speak the truth in love, which means truth must be guided with care for the other person's good and well-being. Truth without love becomes harsh. Love without truth becomes hollow. Wisdom holds both truth and love

together and delivers them at the right moment. Speaking truth in love requires asking God through prayer: Is this the right time? Is this person ready? Am I seeking their good, or merely expressing myself?

Jesus modeled this perfectly. He did not give every person the same level of truth at the same time. He spoke gently to the broken and firmly to the proud. He withheld information when hearts were unprepared, because He valued transformation over information. His timing was never reactive; it was purposeful and loving. He chose moments that would produce fruit. Match the Moment reminds us that God cares not only about what we say, but when and why we say it. Sometimes obedience means speaking clearly. Sometimes obedience means waiting silently. In both cases, love governs the timing, and truth remains the standard.

## 5. Live What You Say

Live What You Say means that credibility is not built by explanation but by obedience. In Scripture, actions are never secondary to words. When an individual's life aligns with what they teach, trust grows naturally. Their explanations become shorter because their character fills in the gaps, and authority feels steady rather than forced. But when words and actions do not align, every statement is quietly questioned. Even truth can begin to sound manipulative when it is not embodied by the speaker. The Bible consistently treats misalignment between word and deed, not as a communication flaw, but as a spiritual flaw. **James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** Paul, in his letter to **Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.** God's word tells us that people are known by their fruit, and that hearing without doing is self-deception, and that profession without obedience is denial. In God's economy, credibility is behavioral, not verbal or self-profession.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. He never asked others to go where He would not go first. He taught humility and then knelt to wash feet. He spoke of service and then gave His life. He called for obedience and then submitted Himself to the cross. No one could rightly accuse Him of hypocrisy because His life stood behind His words. That is why His authority was unquestionable. Live What You Say reminds us that our actions do indeed preach a message long before our mouths do. In Scripture, authority flows from obedience, not from assigned position, and the loudest form of communication is a life that matches its message.

## 6. Own Your Words

Own Your Words means taking responsibility for what comes out of your mouth. Excellent communicators are willing to be corrected, clarified, and even misunderstood for a time without becoming defensive, as they do not protect their ego at the expense of clarity. When confusion arises, they address it quickly: “That wasn’t clear, let me restate it” or “I said that poorly” or “I misunderstood you.” Nothing accelerates clarity like personal responsibility. Scripture consistently links teachability with wisdom and defensiveness with ruin. ***Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. Proverbs 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.*** The wise listen to advice, and they know a rebuke will help them grow and mature. Humility is not weakness in communication; it is strength under control. Pride clouds clarity, but humility preserves it.

Jesus modeled this posture perfectly. Though sinless, He carried full responsibility for His mission. He did not deflect or blame others when pressure mounted. He submitted His will to God the Father and accepted misunderstanding without insecurity. He was never defensive because He was never protecting Himself; He was committed to faithfulness. Owning your words means caring more about truth and growth than about being right in the moment. It means being willing to be corrected and also willing to correct yourself quickly, so that clarity and unity are preserved. Authority in communication does not flow from always being correct; it flows from being accountable to God the Father for the words you speak.

### Conclusion:

Excellent communication does not ultimately come down to sounding polished or winning arguments. It comes down to representing Christ faithfully in a fallen world. Shaping our communication is not about image management; it is about obedience. God has placed each of us in relationships, families, workplaces, and this church as ambassadors of His Son. Every believer has been gifted in some way, and our speech is one of the primary ways those gifts are expressed to the world around us. When we grow in clarity, precision, listening, discernment, integrity, humility, and responsibility, we are not becoming impressive communicators, we are becoming faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us, for our good and for His glory.

These six points are not communication tips, they’re meant to be expressions of wisdom, integrity, love, humility, and self-control. Scripture rarely treats poor communication as mere ignorance, it frames it as folly, pride, or lack of discipline. And Scripture

consistently honors good communication, treating it as wisdom. Jesus knew exactly who He was. He spoke with precision. He listened deeply. He honored timing and context. He lived what He taught. He bore responsibility without defensiveness. That was not accidental, that was perfect communication flowing from perfect obedience.

So, the call today is simple. Abide in Christ, draw closer to Jesus. Then pursue and train in what God's will is for your life. Ask the Spirit to shape not only what you believe, but how you speak. We will not become excellent communicators by accident. But by God's grace, and through practice, we can speak words that heal rather than wound, words that clarify rather than confuse, and build each other up, rather than break down. When speech flows from a transformed heart and a trained tongue, Proverbs 25:11 is no longer poetic imagery, it becomes our lived reality.