

## A Few Words

1 of 1 | Stillness in Turmoil

### **SLIDE 1** Introduction

I recently finished my daily Bible readings in Ecclesiastes. When I ran across a certain passage, I thought of a message to share with you. It not only involves what we speak, but how much we speak, and why we should or should not speak.

Since being able to speak gives us such an identity for ourselves, many of us feel a sense of wellbeing in speaking. So we do it a lot.

### **SLIDE 2** Some Types of Talkers

**SLIDE 2a The Reporter** - There are some who give you the daily weather report. These are people who state the obvious. They tell you everything they know, like they are your personal news service, official counsellor, or third eye (they are always telling you what you can plainly see for yourself).

**SLIDE 2b The Motor Mouth** - Secondly, there are those who constantly talk about themselves. They can either be drama lamas or just filling you in because they assume you're in the "need to know" loop. They monopolize the conversation and quickly rise to dominate others with their words.

Sometimes these people expect you to fix things for them, but most of the time they just want you to hear their latest story. There is so much going on in their heads they are not going to hear anything you say anyway.

**SLIDE 2c The Instigator** - Thirdly, there are those who find their delight in talking about others. They seem to be experts in deducing what is wrong with everyone around them. They can see a person's problems from a great distance. In other words, they may not even be involved in that person's life, but they have them all figured out.

These people are not only gossips, they can also be malicious. Sometimes they alter their stories to slander others or to make themselves look better. Many times their tales are only to prove their own self-justification for what they said or how they acted.

### SLIDE 3 Why Do I Speak?

However, my message is not about why these excessive talkers do what they do, or even how to deal with people like them. It's more about how we should be—a fourth kind of person. A person that operates in the wisdom of the Word and walks in the ways of God. And to focus my topic even more, it's about what we should speak and when we should speak.

We do not need to have a comment about everything and everyone. Sometimes silence is wisdom, even if you know the answer. You don't have to fill in every comment box you see.

Now back to that passage in Ecclesiastes I talked about:

**SLIDE 4 Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 (NIV)** *"<sup>1</sup> Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. **Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools**, who do not know that they do wrong. <sup>2</sup> **Do not be quick with your mouth**, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God."*

**SLIDE 5** *"God is in heaven and you are on earth, **so let your words be few**. <sup>3</sup> A dream comes when there are many cares, and **many words mark the speech of a fool**."*

Now, after everyone has taken the time to feel the burn, let's unpack what we should say and what we should not say.

### SLIDE 6 You Don't Understand!

Sometimes we do not feel that others understand what we are telling them because we are not garnering the reaction we need from them. We want them to be as impressed as we are. Or we want them to be as offended as we are. Or we want them to be as amazed as we are. Or we want them to simply make us feel the way we want to feel after having "poured our hearts" out to them.

We want everyone to see it our way, rather than to have others offer another point of view contrary to our own.

I have a great video that illustrates this:

**SLIDE 7 It's Not About The Nail** (YouTube)

**SLIDE 8 You Are Not Listening!**

Our present condition towards conversation is the idea that we need to be heard without criticism or correction. We first need to realize that if we engage in dialogue that whomever we are speaking to is also a person. (and sometimes they have all the same issues we do) This makes listening imperative. Why? Because we need to determine if who we are talking to can handle what we are about to say.

To do this, we don't cast a judgmental attitude towards them, we simply listen to them. We listen with wisdom. Do I need to say this to them? What if it spurs them to respond with their own stories? Am I willing to change the purpose of this conversation into being about them and not about me?

They have a word for this:

**SLIDE 9 Consideration**

Consideration is not like being kind. It is taking into consideration the value of that person to you and their ability to handle the things you say. We do this blatantly with children a lot. We assume they have the wherewithal to converse on the level that adults do. We no longer know how to get down to their level and speak in a way that does not injure their self-image.

Let's take modern day prayer as an example:

In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus tells us not to pray as hypocrites do. He tells us this about them:

**SLIDE 10 Matthew 6:7, 8 (NIV)** *"<sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for **they think they will be heard because of their many words.** <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

Jesus then outlines a simple but effective prayer to guide us in our conversations with God. (The Lord's Prayer) In other words, get to the point!

Adding words to words do not make for a better conversation. Often it confuses the issue. It tends more towards getting into an argument over details rather than the main point at hand.

Have you ever been in those conversations that drift from one issue to another? They usually arise from people who drift from one problem to another. Their life is not on a "straight and narrow path," so neither is their speech. They have no focus in what they are saying.

Proverbs tells us:

**SLIDE 11 Proverbs 10:19 (NIV 1984)** *"When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise."*

You therefore have two options here: 1) continue to try to talk to a person who is not listening in the first place, or 2) bow out gracefully or forcefully, whichever is required to end the conversation.

Again, Ecclesiastes tells us, *"fools multiply words."* (Ecclesiastes 10:14 NIV) We really don't know as much as we think we do. And most of what you say to others will be dismissed anyway.

I dismiss a lot of what I hear from others. One, it's because it is gossip about others. Two, it's because people are sharing with me things pertaining to their life's problems, but do not want my advice, counsel, or correction. It really helps getting older, because now I simply forget what they said in the first place.

Again Ecclesiastes says:

**SLIDE 12 Ecclesiastes 5:2b (NIV)** *"God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few."*

A few words, aptly spoken, can do far more than the endless words we propagate. Talking is fun. Sometimes nonsensical conversations are amusing. On the other hand, listening gives us insight into others and makes our helpful words more concise and beneficial.

However, Modern "social media" gives rise to people who can go on and on about themselves and controversial topics with few repercussions. They can comment endlessly without having to deal with another person actually in the room to confront them and their words.

So here's one thing that really ought to get us to shut up. It's when someone confronts us with the foolishness of what we are saying. Unfortunately instead of learning from them, we often stonewall them because they made us look "foolish."

Finally, let's look at the admonition that James gives us:

**SLIDE 13 James 3:2 (NIV)** *"We all stumble in many ways. **Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.**"*

**SLIDE 14 Psalm 141:3 (NIV)** *"Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."*

Just remember what the police tell you when they catch you doing wrong: *Anything you say can and will be used against you.*

**SLIDE 15 Proverbs 17:27 (NIV)** *"**The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered.**"*

When we allow ourselves to get angry, we begin to say all sorts of stuff we shouldn't. Sometimes we will say things to get a rise out of others and cause them to be angry too. Sometimes we want to injure others for how they treated us. Sometimes we want to "vent" regardless of the damage it may do to the person we are "venting" on. Steam from a pressure cooker does not care who it "burns."

So remember this:

**SLIDE 16 James 1:19-20 (NIV)** *"<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."*

### **SLIDE 17 Altar Time**

May the Lord be the one we "vent" on. He understands us perfectly and we are more likely to listen to him than anyone else. Hopefully.

He also is many times the only one who can do anything about the situation that drives our tongues. He also can calm our spirits and restrain our words to others, if we have spoken to him first.