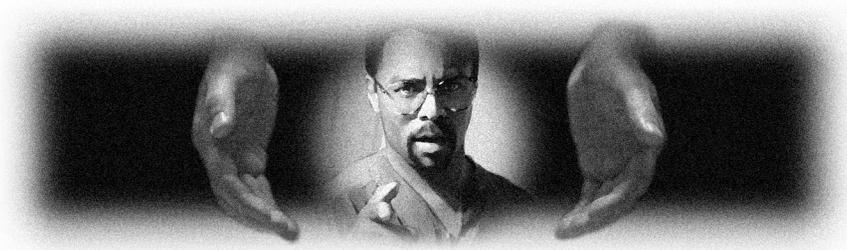


# Lord of Our Speech



## SABBATH—JULY 23

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Psalm 9; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:15, 29; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; James 3:3-13; James 4:11.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Season<sup>1</sup> them with salt [wisdom]. Then you will know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6, NIV).

**IMPORTANT THOUGHT:** God asks us to use our speech to glorify Him and to bless others.

**THE GIFT OF SPEECH CAN BE A GREAT BLESSING** or a terrible curse. When we enter into a new life in Jesus, He invites us to let Him be Lord of our speech. If we use our speech wisely, we glorify God and bless those around us. If we use our speech wrong, we can cause trouble. Harmful words cause God pain and damage the lives of people around us.

Ellen White reminds us that “the ability to use speech is an important gift. If our greatest goal is to know God, then the gift of speech may bring grace (kindness) to others. Speech provides a channel (way) for knowing God’s will.” —Adapted from *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 277.

In this week’s study, we will explore some useful ways to use our speech to glorify God and bless others. The same advice that the apostle<sup>2</sup> Paul gave to young Timothy is given to each one of us today: “Set an example for the believers in what you say” (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV).

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 30.

<sup>1</sup>season—to sprinkle; to flavor.

<sup>2</sup>apostle—a disciple of Jesus whom He chose to preach the gospel after He returned to heaven.

**SUNDAY—JULY 24****WORDS OF PRAISE (Psalm 9).**

The highest honor for people is to speak words of praise to God. The Psalms often encourage us to praise Him. In Psalm 9, David sings, “Lord, I will praise you with all my heart. I will tell about all the miracles you have done. I will be glad and full of joy because of you. Most High God, I will sing praise to you” (Psalm 9:1, 2, NIV).

**Psalms 146–150 are psalms of praise to God. Read two or three of these psalms. What is it about God that caused the psalmist<sup>3</sup> to praise Him so much?**



**Praise God. He heals people who have broken hearts.**

Often in the Bible, we find people who used their gift of speech to praise God. For example, when God showed Daniel the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel praised God (Daniel 2:20-23).

**What advantages come to us by praising God?**

Words influence people who hear or read words and people who speak or write words. When we praise God for His goodness, His mercy,<sup>4</sup> and His acts, we develop more faith in Him. Thinking about God’s goodness, mercy, and acts is important. But there is something about praising God’s goodness, mercy, and acts through speaking or writing that increases their influence on us, so it is no surprise that the Bible has many verses praising God.

**Write your own psalm of praise to God. Share it with a friend. How have your words of praise made you feel?**

**MONDAY—JULY 25****SPEAKING WITH GRACE (KINDNESS) (Colossians 4:6).**

**Study Paul’s advice in Colossians 4:6. In Bible times, salt was**

<sup>3</sup>psalmist—the person who wrote the psalm.

<sup>4</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

used to keep food fresh. So what do you think it means to “season” our speech with salt?



The Bible does not teach that grace begins in the hearts of people. Grace always starts in God’s heart. Grace cannot be worked up. It must be prayed down from heaven. We can speak with grace only if our lives are filled with grace. How do we fill our lives with grace? We fill our lives with grace when we understand through Bible study and prayer how God pours His grace upon us. We must always remember that we receive grace from God through Jesus. We must remember also that we do not deserve His grace. When we remember these two things, we can begin to speak with grace to others.

How did Jesus’ words show grace to the woman and the men who accused her of sin in John 8:1-11? How does His example show how we can speak with grace?

We often face situations where it would be natural for us to speak words that show anger, judgment, or revenge.<sup>5</sup> Often, we might need to speak firm words. But even then, it is how we say these words that can show grace or our own selfish nature. Even when we have not been treated fairly, God desires that we answer with words of grace rather than words of revenge. Jesus gives us a perfect example of speaking words of grace, even to those who treat us unfairly.

**Think about the last time your words did not show grace. All you can do is ask for forgiveness for those words. But what can you do now to prevent yourself from speaking that way again?**

## TUESDAY—JULY 26

### SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE (Ephesians 4:15).

Sometimes, we might need to speak words of rebuke (scolding), advice, or warning.

<sup>5</sup>revenge—doing or saying something bad to someone who has hurt you.

**Read the following verses: Matthew 16:23; Matthew 23:13-39; John 14:8, 9; John 18:19-23. How do you think Jesus must have spoken in these verses to show love and grace? Explain your answer.**

“Jesus Himself did not hide one word of truth. But He spoke the truth always in love. He spoke politely and thoughtfully when He was with the people. He was never rude. He never spoke a rough word. He never gave needless pain to a sensitive person. He did not criticize human weakness. He fearlessly criticized hypocrisy,<sup>6</sup> unbelief, and iniquity (sin). Tears were in His voice as He gave His worst criticisms. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved. Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But Jerusalem rejected (refused) Him, the Savior. Still, He looked upon Jerusalem with love, pity, and sorrow so deep, it broke His heart. Every soul was very important in His eyes. Jesus always carried Himself with dignity (honor). But He bowed with tender love for every member of the family of God. In all people, Jesus saw fallen souls. He knew it was His mission to save everyone.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

**Read Ephesians 4:15. How do you understand what it means to speak the “truth” in love? Is “truth”**

**still “truth” if spoken in any other way but love?**

Sometimes, we fail to speak the truth in love. We seem to fall into one of two traps. Some people are quick to speak the truth, but fail to speak it in love. Other people replace love with emotions that prevent them from speaking the truth at all.

**It is not what we say but how we say it that makes a big difference. Stand in front of a mirror. Then practice saying the same words in a loving way and in a harsh, unkind way. You will be shocked that the words themselves may be the same, but their meaning will seem different.**

### **WEDNESDAY—JULY 27**

#### **SPEAKING IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).**

When someone talks about speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, we think of preaching. The Bible is clear that God wants all preaching to be given in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Study Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 and what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. What is the secret of powerful preaching?**

Powerful preaching is not the result

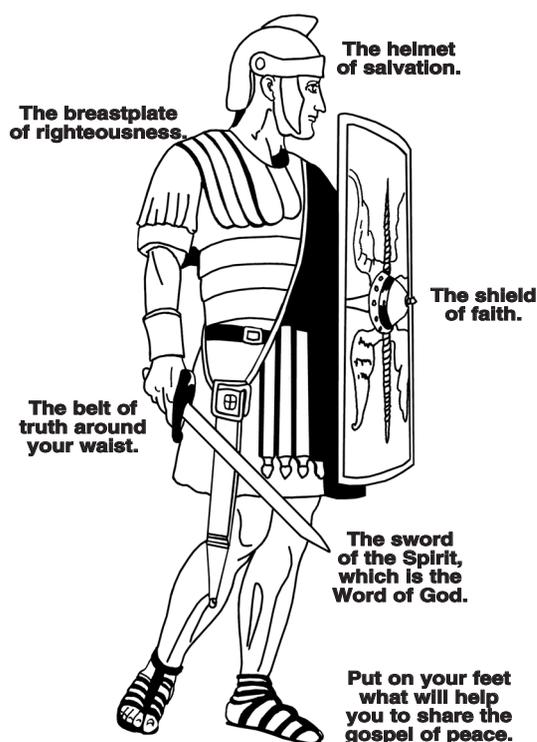
<sup>6</sup>hypocrisy—when a person says he or she believes in God, but then does not act like it.

of human wisdom. Powerful preaching is proof that a person has a close relationship with Jesus. The same Holy Spirit who approved Paul's preaching will also humble preachers today to speak with the Holy Spirit's power.

But speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit is not limited to preaching. God plans that we speak all of our words with the Holy Spirit's power. Each one of us who lives a new life in Jesus has the honor and responsibility of speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Speaking with the Holy Spirit's power does not always mean just speaking very well (Exodus 4:10; 1 Corinthians 2:1). If we are speaking in the Holy Spirit, our words, our voice, and our message will show the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). Our words show the kind of people we are. Our words will show if Jesus is our Lord.

Also, we must never confuse beautiful speech with speaking in the Holy Spirit. Many of history's worst dictators were men who were very powerful and outstanding speakers. But they were not speaking in the Holy Spirit.

**What principles<sup>7</sup> do the following verses show that help us know who is speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 12:1-3; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9, 10; Ephesians 6:13-20. How can you use these principles in your own speech?**



## THURSDAY—JULY 28

### AVOIDING “EVIL LANGUAGE” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV).

Paul warned the believers in Ephesus to avoid “evil language.” Unfortunately, many of us are in places where “evil language” is common. People often use God's name to swear with. They often use dirty language and make rude or sexy comments. It is dangerous for Christians to hear such language all the time. Sooner or later, such language will influence us to where we may use these words. We must always be on guard.

<sup>7</sup>principles—basic rules of life.

**How would you describe “evil language”? Why is “evil language” not limited only to swear words? Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 10:18; Ephesians 4:31; James 3:3-12; James 4:11.**



**A small spark can start a big fire. One evil word can set your life on fire.**

“Evil language” tears down (is negative). The Greek word used in 1 Timothy 3:11, translated “slanderers [liars]” (KJV) or “malicious<sup>8</sup> talkers” (NIV), is *diabolos*. *Diabolos* is one of the names used for Satan. When people use evil language, they are really doing Satan’s work! What an example to the power connected with our words!

But Paul asks believers to use speech that is “good for necessary edification [encouragement]” (Ephesians 4:29, NKJV). Edification really means “building up.” One translation puts it this way: “Don’t [do not] let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say

will help those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV).

Our words have a powerful influence for good or for evil. Our words will either build up others in faith or tear them down. We all have experienced the power of good and evil words. We all have experienced words that built us up or tore us down. How important it is for us to watch not just our words, but how we say them. Even the right words said the wrong way can be “evil language.”

**How much “evil language” do you speak? We are not talking just about swear words. We are talking about untruths, lies about other people, and “tall” tales. What about being judgmental and negative? What things might you need to change in your speech?**

## FRIDAY—JULY 29

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** The wise man Solomon reminds us that there is a time to speak and also “a time to be silent [quiet]” (Ecclesiastes 3:7, NIV). Jesus is Lord of our speech. So we should speak for the glory of God and for the blessing of others. We should also know when it is time to keep silent.

How much are you letting Jesus be Lord of your speech? Spend time reading the Bible, giving more attention to God’s words than to your own.

<sup>8</sup>malicious—wanting to hurt others.

Use a journal to write down your thoughts. When you close your time of silence, you might find that you better understand the gift of speech.

“I wish we could promise in our hearts that we would not say one word against a brother or a sister. . . . Do not gossip about them and make comments about their character. Instead, go to them in the love of Jesus and the love of the truth and try to help them.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 289.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Jesus was known as a speaker of “gracious [kind] words” (Luke 4:22, NKJV). This may mean both His speech and the way He spoke. What stories in the Gospels<sup>9</sup> show the gracious speech of Jesus? What can we learn from these stories?
2. We like to think of speech as a personal thing. But how do we, as a church, use the power of speech? Why is it important for us as a church to use speech wisely?
3. What advice would you give to a person who works where evil language is common? Why should a person try to stay in such a place? Why should a person leave such a place?

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<sup>9</sup>Gospels—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.