Unwholesome Speech

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**Foundational Scripture:** Eph. 4:29; Jam. 1:26

**Intro**:

* There are certain commands and principles laid out in the bible that for some reason or the other we tend to downplay, forget or ignore altogether. One such principle is that of **Unwholesome Speech**. You would think that Christians, of all people, would be the ones you expect kind, encouraging, wholesome words from. But what if I told you that it is Christians, of all people, who are known for hurtful, discouraging and unwholesome speech. This in no way applies to every one of God’s people, but it does seem quite often that this is one of those things followers of Christ could care less about.
* We could always use a reminder about God’s word and the principles He lays out in it for us to live by and practice each day. This morning, I want to remind all of us about **Unwholesome Speech** and the dangers of it. We can’t pick and choose what we like and what we don’t like about the word of God. We either do all that He says or we do none of it. Allow me to share with you three aspects of **Unwholesome Speech** that we should avoid and always seek to correct:

1. **Taking God’s Name in Vain**
   1. I list this as the first point because this is perhaps the one aspect we tend to forget or ignore the most and we need to be reminded of how dangerous and how sinful this really is.
   2. The bible repeatedly warns of using the name of God in vain (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; 24:10-16; Deut. 5:11; Matt. 5:33-37; Jam. 5:12). It is incredibly unfortunate that we cannot understand the nature of the name of God as people did in the OT.
   3. God’s name was considered so utterly holy and exalted that scribes would often perform a ceremonial washing of themselves and then use a special pen to write His name on the scroll. People would never call him by His proper name.
   4. Yet, today, our society, our culture and our world at large takes the name of God in vain as if it is nothing. Taking God’s name in vain means that we misuse His name. In the OT, when one called upon God, they were to do so with respect to thanksgiving, honor, sacrifice, oaths and cries for help. God’s name is directly associated with who He is! We insult Him every time we use His name worthlessly and casually.
   5. Today people use God’s name to prove a point to somebody else. People use God’s name in vain by trying to be the loudest person in the room or in winning an argument. People use God’s name in vain when expressing approval about something or someone. None of these things come remotely close to honoring God.
   6. We need to ask ourselves when we use the name of God if we are actually calling to God? Are we in a moment where you find yourself needing to trust Him? Are we consciously choosing to express a sentiment before God? Are we giving Him honor or thanks or are we just doing it because it’s the popular thing to do?
   7. One of the most popular acronyms if not the most popular acronym used in social media is “OMG.” There was a time where we would correct our children and our neighbors when this language was used. Today, we welcome it, entertain it and call it “cool.” There is no instance or situation in which taking God’s name in vain should ever be called “cool” or condoned as such. We will have to answer to God for the way we use His name.
2. **Obscene Language/ Coarse Jesting**
   1. James tells us in James 3 that one of the most powerful and perhaps most evil parts of our body is the tongue. The tongue is such a small portion of the body, yet it can set even the greatest forest on fire (Jam. 3:1-12). With it we bless and we curse. James says these things should never be so among God’s people.
   2. Yet, obscene language is very common among religious circles and sadly among some of God’s people. It’s paradoxical to even say that. Obscene language is any speech that is disgusting, repugnant, indecent and immoral against all moral and godly standards. What’s the purpose of this language?
   3. People often use obscene language to attract attention to themselves. If someone wants to be the loudest person in the room or attract attention to themselves, obscene language will do it.
   4. People may use this to try and one up and individual. People try to show others “power” and “authority” by using such language. But if a person cannot tame his/her tongue, they aren’t showing power but instead they are showing their weakness and failure to properly control and conduct a situation including themselves.
   5. People use obscene language often when they are angry and they want to hurt others. People who want to insult and hurt one another will turn to these “colorful” words to make some harsh statement. Such language serves to create strife, hatred, sin and evil. These things should never be found among God’s people (Eph. 4:31-32; Col. 3:8).
   6. Along the same lines, coarse jesting or dirty jokes are considered as filth before God (Eph. 5:3-4). Coarse jesting and crude joking are attempts to elicit laughs by crossing a line into impropriety. The use of obscene language, sexual innuendo, rude or racist comments is often used to garner laughs, attention and entertainment.
   7. What does it say about people who need to use obscene language, hurtful words and racist slurs at the cost of everyone else just to garner some attention and a few laughs? Does that sound like something God’s people should be laughing at or endorsing? Those who engage or endorse such things have no part with God (Eph. 5:5).
3. **Gossiping/Slander**
   1. The bible has a lot to say about gossip and slander and the person who is involved in such things. First of all, note that gossip includes any conversation or reports about someone that may be untrue or unconfirmed. Gossiping involves spreading information to other people that’s been told to someone in confidence perhaps for some kind of self-gain or entertainment purpose (Prov. 11:13; 17:9; 20:19).
   2. A lot of gossip happens because people are bored, unproductive and plain lazy (1 Tim. 5:13-14). There may not be any pre-meditated intention to gossip but due to laziness and someone not doing what they are supposed to be doing, gossip becomes a way to fill the silence, garner attention, feel productive and entertain others and themselves.
   3. Gossiping is hurtful, it betrays a person’s trust and it destroys relationships (Prov. 11:9; 18:8). There is no such thing as good gossip or helpful gossip. If there are already existing problems in relationships, gossip will only add fuel to the fire (Prov. 26:20). All gossip is wrong, evil and it will destroy people’s lives and eventually ours as well. Once a word, leaves our mouths we can’t take it back!
   4. The big brother to gossip is slander. Slander is act of spreading false reports and accusations against someone for the sole purpose of self-gain and destroying their lives and reputation.
   5. The bible repeatedly warns us of such behavior or intent (Ex. 23:1; Jam. 4:11) and the person who does engage in it will have to answer to God for it face-to-face. One does not slander unless the intent is to endanger them, hurt them or destroy them (Lev. 19:16; Prov. 16:28). The one who spreads slander is considered to be a fool (Prov. 10:18-19).
   6. Did you know that the word devil means slanderer or accuser? When we slander someone or falsely accuse someone, we should note that it puts us in the same boat as the devil himself. And why else is he called a murder except that he slanders (Jn. 8:44).
   7. Gossip and slander are characteristics of the old man (that man that should be dead; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8). This kind of behavior should never be found among God’s people. What does it say about what kind person we are if we engage in slander and gossip?
   8. Gossip and slander are sometimes associated in the descriptions of those people we may call the worst sinners (scum of the earth; Rom. 1:29-30; 2 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:12). What does that say about us when we gossip or slander someone? We are just like them!

**Conclusion:** We don’t get to get away with unwholesome speech just because everyone else is doing it! We need to be aware that we are to be examples and light in a dark world. The lamp no longer has any purpose if the light should go out. The fruit tree is wasting soil if it’s not bearing fruit and it must be thrown in the fire. If we engage in any form of unwholesome speech we are just as barren as that fruit tree and worthless as the lamp without its light source and we will eventually find ourselves knocking on the door to Hell. The antidote is to come to Christ. The antidote is self-control. And of all the things we would like to control or we try to control, the truth is we can only fully control self. Perhaps that’s the lesson. We need to focus on controlling ourselves and our tongues and our speech by looking to Christ and being more like Him!