

My Big Mouth!

4 of 4 | Muddy Waters

SLIDE 1 Introduction

Our series about the power of our words comes to a close today. In it we have seen that our words, whether produced in faith, fear, or frustration, contain creative power for good and for bad.

More often than not, our words are unrestrained, unguided expressions of things that run through our minds, only guided by our immediate emotions. This can be a very destructive force.

To combat the ill effects of loose lips we need to first become conscience of what we say. By this I mean we need to consider the consequences of our words before they are released into the spirit world to produce the things we say.

Rash words and hasty words are words spoken in the moment, without consideration for the greater good and the deeper commitments of our lives.

When we say we didn't mean what we said, it means we spoke out of our feelings of the moment and not our long term commitment to our relationships or our goals.

Words like "I'm done," or "I'll never speak to you again," are examples of things we say that we don't actually want to transpire.

Again, listening to ourselves speak and determining why we say things are the first things we must master if we are ever going to guide our lips into the things we really want to come to pass.

SLIDE 2 Sowing Seeds

Another thing I want to add to this series is the fact that when you say something, you are sowing seeds of that image in the hearts of others. They can be seeds of faith or fear, seeds of love or hate. We pollute the minds and hearts of others when we criticize people or speak ugly of those over us in authority, like our police, teachers, and even politicians.

The Bible calls this muddying the waters. We may handle our criticisms with little damage, but others may be deeply affected by our words and attitudes. This is

especially true of speaking destructive things in front of children.

Our sarcasm and innuendos may alter the outlook of those around us and bring damage to their lives. In the least, it may cause them to mimic our words and not realize what they are doing to themselves and those they mindlessly speak against.

SLIDE 3 Muddying the Waters

Today it is hard to make sense of all the things that are spoken. Even with ill intent, people speak lies and what we now call misinformation. There are people of anonymity on the internet that use their voice to lead others astray and take delight in misguiding and making fun of the gullible—pranking them, as it's called.

They may see and know the truth on a topic, but desire to affect others in a negative way, just to see them fail or to inflict pain and suffering on them. How-To videos abound with misinformation that can physically damage you. Pranks have become internet assaults through these "fake" videos.

Unfortunately the church is not immune to this plight. We also have used doctrine to control others or put "the fear of God" into those who we dislike.

Some of us do it to maintain our lofty positions. Others do it to tear down the positions of respect others possess.

NOTE: Tearing down the positions of authority in our land only leads to lawlessness It does not drive out the evildoers.

The prophet Ezekiel, during the time of the exile in Babylon, said this about those who maintained their authority by tearing down others through their words:

SLIDE 4 Ezekiel 34:17-19 (NIV) *"¹⁷ As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats."*

SLIDE 5 *"¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? **Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?"***

SLIDE 6 *"¹⁹ Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?"*

You put your foot in it when you begin hampering those around you with your words. The purpose of ministering to others is to make it clear what the Lord desires in our lives. Yes, the Bible, and the teachings of it, can perplex even the greatest of theologians. However, we must keep first things first and allow the Holy Spirit to then guide us into the deeper things, as we are prepared to receive them.

In this chapter, Ezekiel is speaking to the shepherds (leaders) of Israel. However, this applies to all leadership. It applies to even you. Everyone is leading someone with their words. It may be a spouse, a neighbor, a friend, or a child.

SLIDE 7 Cause and Effect

We must be more aware of how our words are affecting them, how they are guiding them, and how they are in turn, using them in their lives.

Have you ever heard someone quoting you and you replied, "That's not what I meant!" Well, that may very well be, but that's what they heard.

Again, we must be much more aware of how our words are affecting those we speak to. And we must just limit the words we speak about others to them. Like they say, "If you can't say something good, then say nothing at all."

The Law says in Leviticus:

SLIDE 8 Leviticus 19:16 (NIV) *"Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord."*

Some inadvertent things you said to someone or about someone may be carried to others and start a great harmful commotion among those who were at peace before. Don't be a tale-bearer.

SLIDE 9 The Water of Life

We've covered a lot about our tongues during this series. My hope is that it just gets us to think before we speak.

I like it when you can sit down and speak freely with others around you, but we must always be careful where our words will go and what they will do. Words have power. Creative power. They may create a situation you did not expect, either because of what you said or because of how it was understood.

So let's make what we say very clear, as people who will be judged for every word we speak. Yes, at times we want to clear the air, but let's first be sure we are not muddying the waters.

Paul puts it this way in the New Testament:

SLIDE 10 Colossians 3:5-10 (NIV) *"⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived."*

SLIDE 11 *"⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."*

Can you imagine the Apostle Paul having to tell the believers of his day not to lie? How much more now when the lines between truth and fiction are being muddied by slander, and even flattery. Yes, both are lies. Especially in the fact that they show the hate of our hearts rather than the love of Christ.

SLIDE 12 Proverbs 10:18 (NIV) *"Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips [flattering] and spreads slander is a fool."*

Slander in the Bible simply means to tell something to someone about another, out of their hearing, so they cannot confront you about what you said about them. It uses the idea of being a whisperer, a tale-bearer. It comes from the word "slanted."

This issue outweighs the creative force our words can be in our lives. Our loose words have had a negative impact also in the church and its reputation in the world. They observe our squabbles to the point that they see us preaching against each other more than they see a love for them in their lost state. They see us slander each other and demand that they listen to us, "not them."

It's not just that we are losing their respect, it's also that we are tearing down our own house with our own words. Paul told the Galatian church this:

SLIDE 13 Galatians 5:15 (NIV) *"If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you*

will be destroyed by each other."

This is the biblical way of saying we're "chewing the fat." "Chewing the fat" is an 1880s British phrase, which until recently meant to gossip, grumble, and complain. It was commonly said of a person who just talks too much.

SLIDE 14 Altar Time

Now you know why your pastor seems out of the loop. I won't listen to a lot of it so that I won't repeat it. So much could just go unsaid, but we refuse to put a bit in our mouths and wonder why the rudder of our ship is doing so much damage in our relationships. Our lives are off course because we do not watch our mouths.

For me, this year I want to master the incessant complaining of my lips. So I am praying, "Lord, convict my conscience anytime I utter words of contempt or complaint for anything or anyone." It's nothing more than self-justification for my shortcomings. I'm exalting myself by putting others down.

You have to first catch yourself doing it before you can change it. May this be the focus of all that has been said in this series.

All that has been said draws me to a conclusion that may be very unfortunate:

SLIDE 15 Isaiah 29:13 (NIV) *"The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, **but their hearts are far from me.** Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught."*

Jesus repeated this to the Pharisees of his day (Matthew 5:8,9). Then he also added this:

SLIDE 16 Matthew 15:10 (NIV) *"¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but **what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.**""*

We do not want to be a defiled church before God. We should be clean, not unclean. We must not continue to muddy the waters.

"Lord, may our hearts be so near to you that every word we speak is born of your Spirit moving within us. Bring conviction upon us continually."