

The Greatest Speaker

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[0:00] Well, we are going through a series on encouragement in this class. We're using the book *How Words Change Lives* by Gordon Chang. In week one, we put together a definition of encouragement.

! Christian encouragement is also not gloomy, naturally gloomy people anyways, saying awkward, unnatural things.

Christian encouragement does flow out of who we are. And so, in some ways, a naturally cheerful person is going to find encouragement easier, more natural to them.

But it's not something only those kind of people can do. It's something that we're all called to do, because it really doesn't flow out of what we are naturally, but it flows out of what we have in the gospel.

So, that's, really, we said that's not what Christian encouragement is. Now, let me ask you, what then is Christian encouragement? What is it? There's several parts to it.

[1:21] So, if you could help me with that. What? The different parts of Christian encouragement. Speaking the truth in love.

And that comes from Ephesians chapter 4, verse 15. We're speaking the truth in love. And what did we say the truth primarily is in that passage in Ephesians?

The gospel. We're going to speak the gospel in love to one another. What's another part of this definition of encouragement? There's other aspects to it.

Let me ask, why are we doing it? What's the purpose? To encourage one another. What's the encouragement towards? For?

Christ-likeness. Very good. We're just not making people happy. Doing whatever it takes to make them happy. No, the idea behind encouragement is that we are doing it in order to see Christ formed in them.

[2:27] To be Christ-like. So, there's other aspects. There's a couple other parts to this definition. What's another part?

What's supposed to give it urgency? Give us urgency to do it. As we see the day approaching. Hebrews 10. So, as we see the day approaching.

That great day of judgment that's going to come upon us. That great day of disaster. And that great day where everything is going to be changed. As we see that great day coming.

We're supposed to encourage one another on to Christ-likeness. Now, is it just for believers? No. It's for believers and unbelievers.

Because we're all going to be there. And the goal essentially is the same. And we want to present everyone perfect in Christ for that day. And so, encouragement is something, yes, we normally think about being particularly for believers.

[3:34] And that's how we're going to be using it mostly. But it's also for unbelievers. It's also for unbelievers. And so, Christian encouragement is about speaking the gospel into other people's lives.

As we see that great day of judgment coming. Whether it's believers or unbelievers. And we're doing it for Christ-likeness. Now, last week we talked about the power of words.

Encouragement is all about using words. And so, we talked about how powerful words can be. Now, you know the old children's song or whatever it's called.

Sticks and stones may break my bones. But names will never hurt me. You know that? You've heard that? So, thinking about what we talked about last week.

Is that true? Biblically. Is that a true statement? What do you guys think? No. Why not? Dale?

[4:39] The words are powerful. What does James 3 call? Say? What's our tongue full of? Does anyone remember? Poison.

Does poison hurt and kill? Yes, our tongue is poisonous. And our words can be poisonous. Can you think of another passage where it talks about the power of words to hurt?

We looked at one last week from Proverbs. Proverbs 12, 18. Reckless words pierce like a sword. Like a sword. So, yeah, sticks and stones may break my bones. But words can pierce me like a sword. So, I was thinking about this.

Should we really be teaching our children to respond to name calling that way? With that, oh, sticks and stones may break my bones. But words will never hurt. Names will never hurt me. I don't think so.

[5:40] Because that denies the fact that words are powerful. That they hurt. That the wounds that come from words can be far long lasting. Or last far longer than sticks and stones.

No. Jesus tells us the real remedy. The biblical way of dealing with people who misuse words against us. And call us names, we'll say. He says we bless those who curse us.

We speak well to those who hurt us. And so, we overcome evil with good. Because words are powerful to do good and to do evil.

And we can overcome evil with good. And so, that's something of the power of words. That's what we've talked about last week. Now, today is our last day of foundation building.

And in the coming weeks, we're going to be talking about how to do this encouragement. How to do encouragement. And so, but today we're digging down finally to the bedrock.

[6:43] To the final, the lowest thing. And this lesson is called The Greatest Speaker. The Greatest Speaker. And so, we're going all the way down to the bedrock of God.

Who God is. What does God do with his words? Because if we are going to be encouragers, and we're going to live a life of encouragement, where encouragement is a natural part of our life from here to the day that we die, we got to dig down into this and tap into this.

And that is that God speaks. And when he speaks, he does powerful and wonderful things with his word. And so, if we're going to obey Hebrews 10.25, let us encourage one another.

And all the more as we see the day approaching, we have to look at how God uses his words. And so, we're going to be talking about him. Now, first let me tell you a story.

Okay. September 1st, 1939. Does anyone know what happened on September 1st, 1939?

[7:54] Lou? Okay. You don't know. I was really trusting in you.

Man, don't trust in man. Does anyone know? September? World War II started. Okay.

Germany invaded Poland. September 1st, 1939. It's the official beginning of the Second World War. On September 3rd, two days later, Great Britain declared war on Germany.

Germany. And that word, that declaration, had a profound effect in nations all across the world.

Because, you know, Great Britain, at that time, it was in the waning years of its empire.

And it had nations all over the world that used to be a part of it that were now joined to it because they were a commonwealth. And so, that word of Great Britain had powerful effects on nations all over the world.

[9:00] Listen to what the Prime Minister of Australia said on September 3rd in a radio address to his people, to his nation. It's my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany and her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her.

And that, as a result, Australia is also at war. So, a word, a declaration, a half a world away, spoken by the right person, the right time, and the right situation, was able to change millions of lives clear across the globe.

The right person speaking at the right time, the right words, has immense power. Ronald Reagan was called the Great Communicator.

Or he is called that. He knew how to use right words at the right time. And he was a powerful man. He was the President of the United States, the most powerful man in the world. And so, his words could have power.

His words could rally countries and cause action. And so, when he stood outside the Berlin Wall, and he said, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

[10:18] It was a stand. It was words that had power. And those words and that idea percolated in Eastern Europe. And it was part of the fall of communism.

So, the point is, is the right person speaking the right words at the right time has immense power. And that's true on the human scale. That's true of us. Encouragement is powerful because words are powerful.

But what if the speaker is God? What if the speaker is God? And so, this morning, we're going to take a glorious romp through the scriptures and see what happens when God speaks.

What happens when God speaks? Well, first of all, when he speaks, he speaks the truth. He speaks the truth. What happens when God speaks?

Truth comes out. Numbers 23, 19. God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind.

[11 : 26] So, what do men do when they speak? Eventually, all men do this. Whenever they, if they're going to speak, eventually, sooner or later, men lie.

They go back on their word. That's man. He's unstable as water. You can't depend upon him. The psalmist said, all men are liars. And that's true of me.

And you can't condemn me because that's true of you. There's always a tug in our hearts to exaggerate, to hide, to equivocate, to change the meaning of our words, or to parse our words.

So, we say, well, it depends on what the meaning of the word is, is. But this is the great difference between us and God.

God is not a man that he should lie. So, let me ask you, why do we lie? Why do people lie? What are some reasons?

[12 : 36] Fear. We're afraid of something, and so we lie. Self-interest. So, let's take each of those.

Does God have anything to fear? No. Never occasion to fear. Never occasion to lie. Self-interest. So, we're, we want something for ourselves.

And we want it so badly that we're willing to lie in order to get it. And, does God lack any power? If he wants something, he doesn't need to resort to lying to get it, like we do.

What else do, why else do we lie? Shame. So, to cover our sin. Right? We, we lie in order to cover our sin.

God has no sin to cover. He can stand in the perfect, in his perfection, and he can have anyone look at him. And there's nothing to fear, there's nothing to shame, there's no sin to cover, so he has no reason to lie.

[13 : 47] We lie to accomplish something. We think the only way that something is going to get done, whether it's good or bad, is to lie. Well, God has infinite resources, and so he doesn't need to fall on deceit to accomplish anything.

So, God is not a man that he should lie. God is the greatest speaker, because when he speaks, it's always and only, completely the truth.

And that's a world of difference between us and him. His word is the gold standard. There's a bumper sticker that you can still see occasionally that says, God said it, I believe it, that settles it.

There's only one thing wrong with that, and that's the middle part. I believe it, because sometimes I do believe it. Sometimes, honestly, I don't believe it. But it doesn't even matter, whether I believe it or not.

God said it, and that settles it, because he speaks the truth, whether I believe it or not. So, what happens when God speaks?

[14 : 58] The truth comes out. What happens when God speaks? Let's turn to Isaiah chapter 55, familiar passage, to see what happens. Isaiah 55, verse 10 and 11.

Isaiah 55, 10 and 11. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower, and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth.

It will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I desire, and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. So, let me ask you, what happens when God speaks?

What follows? According to Isaiah 55, 10 and 11. Mark. His word is effective.

Roger. It always accomplishes for the purpose that it was spoken. So, basically, whatever God wants to happen when he speaks, it happens.

[16 : 29] Whatever he wants to happen, happens. His word is the expression, the command of his power, and his strength. It's the articulation of his purpose.

And as soon as he articulates his purpose, the purpose is swiftly being carried out. And so, it does whatever it is designed to do in heaven above, or on earth below.

It never returns to him void or empty. Now, remember, we said last week that our words reflect our character. Our words reflect who we are.

And God's words are no different. God is infinite in power, and so his word comes. And when he infuses it with power, it's infinite in power. And God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge.

And so, Solomon says, from his mouth comes understanding. So, his words uncover wisdom. And they themselves are full of wisdom.

[17 : 32] And so, his words never come back to him empty. Because his words are completely wise. They're just the right ones. They're completely powerful. They have enough strength to do whatever he intends for them to do.

They accomplish everything he intends for his words to do. And so, what happens when God speaks? Whatever God wants to happen, happens. Well, what does God's words do?

What are some of the things that he wants to happen and that happens? Well, God speaks to create. Turn to Genesis 1. Probably most of you have this memorized.

But let's look at it again. Genesis 1. And we're going to read the first three verses. Genesis 1. Genesis 1. God's word is powerful to create.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep.

[18 : 41] And the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light. God said, let there be light.

And there was light. So, what a picture. The earth is formless and empty. And darkness was over the waters.

But the spirit, the breath of God. It's the same word in Hebrew. The spirit, the breath of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light.

And light came. Out of the darkness, light came. And so, the chapter goes on and on. And God said, and God said, and God said, and God said.

God's word is powerful to create. Psalm 33, 6. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. And by the breath of his mouth, all their hosts.

[19 : 46] So, God's spirit and God's word. They were together in the beginning. And they worked together to achieve God's purposes.

That's the pattern of creation. And if you would think about it, that's the pattern of the rest of scripture. The word and the spirit going together, accomplishing whatever God wants his word to do.

God's word creates and with his word he commands men. Turn over to Genesis 2, 15. The Lord commands men.

He gives his law. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it, you will surely die.

Right from the very beginning, mankind was made to hear, to recognize, to obey God's voice, God's word.

[20 : 56] We were never meant to be self-directing. We were never meant to live without his word in our lives telling us what we should do, what are we supposed to live like.

And if you look around everywhere, is the result of us not listening to God's word. And so we refuse his counsel, we refuse his law, and instead we listen to ourselves.

And, in fact, we bear the penalty for it. Our lives are a ruinous mess because we won't obey. His law is good and we're meant to live under it and with it.

Now the kings of Israel had to handwrite a copy of the law for themselves. Upon ascending to the throne, one of the first things they were to do was to write a hand copy of the entire Pentateuch and they were to read it continually because as rulers of God's people, they were meant to live with God's word coming into their lives and commanding them.

And that's true of the kings of Israel and that's true of us because we are God's stewards. As image bearers of God, we were meant to rule this world. We're given dominion over it.

[22 : 09] And so that's where we get wisdom. That's how we're supposed to know how we're supposed to live and how we're supposed to rule over this world and how we're supposed to relate to each other. We're meant to listen to God's word and so God directs our lives with his word.

It's nothing new there. What else does God's word do? Well, God's word powerfully blesses us. It blesses. It blesses. We sort of have a sentimental view of blessing in our culture.

We don't have a very biblical view normally in our culture. We don't understand it. So we say, someone bless the food. Or when someone sneezes, bless you.

Or we say, without thinking, God bless you. But a blessing, biblically, is a powerful word. Powerful word of God spoken over someone's life.

And it's a powerful word to shape their lives. It's a powerful word to send them on their way to the place that God has intended them.

[23:18] To take them, to shape their life and their destiny. So remember, Isaac is getting ready to bless Esau. But Jacob stole the blessing.

And that whole idea is lost on us, isn't it? Because we don't understand what the Bible means when it's talking about blessing.

We devalue God's blessing. And we scratch our head and we wonder and say, what's the big deal? Why can't Isaac just take his word back? Jacob, you're not blessed anymore.

Esau, you've got the blessing. Instead, Jacob says, it's done. He can't take it back. Because we don't understand the power of the spoken word.

Because a blessing in a biblical sense is a powerful word of God that forever changes and shapes a person's life. And so when Isaac blessed Jacob, the word was spoken.

[24:18] God's word had gone out and had gone forth and it was going to start working in Jacob's life. And that's what you see. It couldn't be undone. You can't take back your words.

And so what does God do when he speaks? Well, he blesses us. He blesses his people. Genesis 1:27, so God created man in his own image and the image of God he created them.

Male and female he created them. God blessed them. And he said to them, see the blessing and the words go together. He said to them, be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. And so God's word of blessing went out and he spoke over and into Adam and Eve's lives and all their children's lives and he blessed them and he said, rule, rule.

And we still rule. We've sinned. We rule in wicked ways because we have sinful hearts but we still multiply and increase.

[25:27] Why? Because God's powerful word went out in a blessing for us. And so that blessing bears fruit again and again and again. When someone has a baby we say, oh, what a blessing.

And it's true. God's word of blessing has borne fruit again and it bears fruit every time someone has a baby. So God blessed Adam and Eve.

He blessed Abraham. He still blesses us. He speaks over us. He gives us promises and those promises are so sure that they change our whole life because from that point that promise has been made.

God's course of action towards us is determined. All things will work together for good. So from that point on God will exercise his power and his authority and his goodness and his grace to make sure everything that comes into our lives works for our good.

Well, what happens when God speaks? He blesses us and he reveals himself. Our words reveal who we are. Out of the overflow of a man's heart the man speaks.

[26:38] Out of the overflow of God's heart God speaks. All scripture is God breathed. That should remind you of Genesis 1. The spirit and the breath of God were tied to the spoken word.

So, what is our Bible? Well, it's God's inspired, breathed out, spirit produced, spirit-filled word of God.

And so we saw it last week that words reveal character and when we read the Bible we find out what God is like. So Adam and Eve found out who God was like when he talked to them.

He spoke to them. And as history went on, God spoke more and more revealing more and more of himself to us until finally the word incarnate came.

Until God made his final revelation, his complete revelation. salvation. So what is Christmas about? Well, the Apostle John says you don't understand Christmas until you understand this, that Jesus came as the word.

[28:01] The final and the full revelation of God. So Christmas is about God speaking finally and completely in the person of Jesus Christ, his son.

So, we read in John 1, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

So John begins his gospel. So what kind of world does that word come into? Well, it's not formless and empty anymore, but it is dark.

It's a dark world. It's full of rebellion and strife and chaos. Remember Psalm 2, the nations are raging against God and so God begins his new creation.

That's what John is clearly alluding to. How does the new creation begin? Well, it begins with this new word spoken out of God. And so he does it like he did it the first time.

[29:07] The spirit hovered over the womb of Mary and in the darkness of Mary's womb the spirit was there and then God said, let there be light and Jesus was born and him was life and that life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it. God speaks in Genesis to create and he speaks in the person of his son to recreate.

In these last days, God has spoken to us by his son and when that word, with that word, he doesn't create men, but he recreates them. And so with this word, God shines into our dark souls and with that word, he saves us.

And so that's what happened when God spoke the gospel into your life. It was a powerful word to recreate you. You were joined to Jesus and his death and his resurrection.

The old man died and the new man came to life. And so how does that happen? Paul says it's by the word spoken. It's by the word of Jesus Christ spoken. Listen to what he says in 2 Corinthians for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

[30:38] He shines by speaking light, by speaking Jesus Christ into our lives. And so it's a powerful word. So God is the greatest of all speakers.

He's the greatest of all speakers. His word is powerful to create, to bless, to command, to sustain, to promise, to judge, to reveal himself, and greatest of all to save us.

To save us. And so this is the amazing thing. We are made in his image. We also are speakers.

We also because we're in his image we have the ability to use words, to speak. And if you consider the colossal power of words that God exercises, that speaking is no small thing.

It's not a small thing. It's something that we do all the time and so it's a mundane thing to us. But it's still a wonderful, powerful thing that we do because we're like our Father in heaven.

[31:51] Because of all the creatures in heaven are on the earth. We alone have the ability to use words. And so we get to speak to God and with each other.

And with our words we establish relationships. The most precious things that we have. And with those words we direct and we shape and we control creation.

we exercise our dominion over creation. And with our words we get to speak words that change people's lives. We get to speak the gospel into one another's lives.

And that's what encouragement is. And in encouragement we join God the greatest speaker of all. The great encourager.

And we unleash the truth, the word of his power, the gospel into other people's lives. And so when we encourage one another, when we speak the powerful gospel into each other's lives, we are imitating our father.

[33:01] Now as dearly loved children, God says imitate me. And the way that you can do that is to speak the truth and love to each other. Speak the truth and love and all the more as we see the day approaching.

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