

The Art Of Christian Conversation

Matthew 12:37 [New King James] *“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

We all need to ask how will the Creator God judge our words, especially when we are called to be a living example of our Saviour Jesus Christ, [**Matthew 5:13-16**].

Proverbs 18:21 [New King James] *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”*

Spoken with thought and care our words can produce lasting beneficial results.

But spoken carelessly, words bring harmful consequences and tragic misunderstandings.

We need to stop and evaluate what will be the outcome of the words we utter in ordinary conversation.

The dictionary defines conversation as *“informal talk, often spontaneous in nature.”*

How responsible are we for this everyday type of conversing?

Matthew 12:36 [New King James] *“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”*

Jesus Christ provides the answer to this question showing just how responsible we are for every word we utter.

Matthew 12:35 [New King James] *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”*

This implies that we should become skilled in producing verbal *“good things.”*

Proverbs 25:11 [New King James] *“A word **fitly spoken** is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”*

The ability to say the right thing at the right time has great value.

All of us have experienced that sense of satisfaction that comes when we respond in a mature and fitting manner, [**Proverbs 15:23**].

One way we can use words that are **not** *“fitly spoken”* is by using too many of them.

Proverbs 10:19 [New King James] *“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”*

The more words we use, the easier it is to say the wrong things.

We all need to develop the habit of considering what we should say and how much we should say before we open our mouths.

Another way we can converse in words that are **not** *“fitly spoken”* is by responding prematurely.

Do we really listen to what other people say, or are we too busy trying to butt in with a response?

Do we even let them finish?

We need to consider what the Word of God, the Christian Bible, tells us about such an attitude.

Proverbs 18:13 [New King James] *“He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”*

The old saying “look before you leap” could be modified to “listen and think carefully before you speak.”

How many misunderstandings and hurt feelings would be avoided if this principle was diligently practiced?

All of us have winced under the sting of barbed sarcasm or humiliating insults.

Yet many people still think there is something funny about sarcastically pointing out the faults of other human beings.

But there is really nothing funny about this kind of “*humour*,” all it shows is the immature mind of the speaker.

Some people make fun of themselves. It is good to be able to laugh at yourself, but constant self-depreciation can be dangerous.

Matthew 22:39 [New King James] *“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”*

We are **not** to forget the last part of this command given by our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, verbally belittling yourself or others is **not** fitting for any Christian.

We must always remember we are all made in the “*image*” [Hebrew “*tselem*” meaning resemblance] of the very Creator God, [**Genesis 1:26-27**].

Where do we start to practice all we are learning? –

1 Timothy 5:8 [New King James] *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

What our families need as much as food and shelter is love, a right self-image and an adequate diet of verbal support and praise.

The example of godly conversation must come from the parents.

If our children hear verbal courtesy and thoughtfulness, they will learn to speak respectfully also.

Verbal kindness is contagious, but unfortunately so is verbal cruelty, [**Colossians 3:8-9**].

Ephesians 4:29-32 [New King James] *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Cutting remarks only tear down the hearers, God’s Word is clear on this point. **Note such an attitude grieves the Holy Spirit Who is essential for our maturing into an acceptable created child of God, [Galatians 5:22-25].**

The third commandment and euphemisms –

Exodus 20:7 [New King James] *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”*

So often today we hear the Name of God used in an empty, flippant way, the Holy Names of the Father and Jesus Christ are tossed around with utter disregard.

Notice the warning that goes with this command.

Yet many well-meaning people, out of ignorance, use God’s name in euphemisms.

A euphemism is defined as *“an inoffensive term substituted for one considered offensively explicit or unpleasant.”*

Many sincere people would never use Jesus Christ’s name to exclaim their disgust when making a mistake.

But they will instead say something like *“gee-whiz”* or just a shortened term like *“gee”* not understanding that it is a euphemism for *“Jesus.”*

Similarly, many know that it is wrong to use the Name of God in shock or anger, but they will quickly say *“golly”* or *“gosh.”*

Even though an *“inoffensive”* term is used, because it is used as a substitute to sound like the Name of God, it should **not** be said.

All too often, people in this society use the Name of God along with a condemning verb that sounds horribly profane.

Others would not use that blasphemous epithet, yet are heard saying *“goldarnit”* and similar phrases.

Since this type of term is a euphemism of God’s Name and a wish that the Creator God would condemn, we should avoid using it.

Leviticus 19:12 [New King James] *“And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.”*

Speaking of swearing, notice Jesus Christ’s instruction.

Matthew 5:34-37 [New King James] *“But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”*

There are expressions within this command that are condemned by Jesus Christ.

For example, *“for heaven’s sake”* or *“my heavens”* another is *“land’s sake”* or *“for God’s sake.”*

Jesus made it clear, swearing in any form, but especially using God’s name or His creation, is wrong.

It cheapens and detracts from the importance and the meaning of God and the works of His hands.

Even in an official or public situation when asked to swear by God’s name or on the Christian Bible, simply say *“I affirm this is the truth.”* Spoken by a person with a reputation for honesty, a *“yes”* or *“no”* should be sufficient.

Matthew 12:34-35 [New King James] *“Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good*

treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”

The term “*heart*” refers to our inner thoughts and feelings.

What we allow to enter our minds will eventually come out in some form of verbal expression.

The books we read, the television we watch or what we access on the internet affect our daily thoughts and emotions.

We need to be concerned about the thought-provoking and value-altering media we expose our minds to, for what we read, see or hear will affect our conversations.

Philippians 4:8 [New King James] *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.”*

Our unprepared, spontaneous, idle words reveal aspects of our character to our listeners, and our reputation, [Proverbs 22:1].

We are told in **1 Corinthians 13:5** that love “*thinks no evil*” if our thoughts are tolerant, respectful and kind towards others, then our conversation will reflect this.

The Christian Bible teaches that we can qualify to rule under Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God, [**Matthew 25:21; Luke 19:17; Revelation 5:9-10**].

One of the main ways we can prepare for this future opportunity is by learning to control our thoughts and the conversation those thoughts trigger.

James 3:2 [New King James] *“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”*

The mastering the art of Christian conversation is a vital ingredient in our quest to become mature Christians.