

MBC WOMEN'S STUDY

RELATIONSHIPS: A MESS WORTH MAKING

WINTER/SPRING 2025/26

Class 5: Chapters 6b-7

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMESTER

- This year is going to be about relationships and how God desires His people to come along side one another for more than just surface level conversations and relationships.
- Specifically, we are going to be talking about biblical relationships and friendships that Christians have with one another.

CONTINUATION FROM LAST MONTH'S CLASS

- Last month we stopped on page 54 under the main heading of *The Two Foundation Stones*
- We will continue from that point and then into chapter 6.

Let's look at the two areas that Tripp calls the foundation stones for our relationship.

Remembering Who You Are (54-57)

- “It’s impossible for identity not to be an issue for human beings. God has made us rational creatures who make choices based on the way we interpret life.”
- The obvious question that arises from this statement is what are we using to interpret life. What lens do we have on when we look at others and all that is taking place around us?
- As he further states, “The identity I assign myself will always affect the way I respond to you.”
- How we view ourselves is directly related to how we respond when someone talks to us or treats us in a way that we don’t think we deserve.
- For example: If we think that we are the smartest person in the room...when someone challenges us and what we think, there is going to be trouble and most likely a conflict.
- The more elevated view that we have of ourselves, the more and more offended we are going to be when others *seemingly* contradict what we say.
- **This is from research on self-esteem in our modern-day culture from a wide variety of sources:**

- We live in a culture that heavily emphasizes self-esteem, often linking it to success and happiness, but this has created a paradoxical situation: while promoting positive self-regard, it sometimes fuels narcissism, ignores systemic issues (in "confidence culture"), and researchers debate its actual effectiveness, with some finding strong self-esteem can correlate with negative traits, and that success often *builds* self-esteem rather than the other way around, leading to calls for more self-compassion instead.
- Many experts now advocate for **self-compassion**, which involves treating yourself with kindness and recognizing shared humanity (that suffering is universal) rather than self-pity or inflated self-esteem, notes Self-Compassion.
- This approach fosters resilience and mental well-being without the pitfalls of pure self-esteem, says Psychology Today.
- For the past several decades, psychologists have told us that we need to think about ourselves more and be more positive about ourselves.
 - Recently I saw a commercial where adults were telling kids in a variety of settings and signing a song that they were all special.
 - By the very definition of special, if they all are...then none of them are.
- We have created a culture (and yes, especially inside the church) that thinks they are the center of their own universe and anything or anyone who goes against them is going to pay the price.
- We must remember, when dealing with identity, it is a core issue in people. When you encounter someone who finds their identity in anything outside of Christ (especially when it's found in sinful behavior), there is going to be a war that takes place.
 - When you confront someone about their identity, you are telling them that the very foundation they believe to be true is wrong...and this could go back decades.
- When someone identifies as a victim, that is how they see themselves and everyone is out to get them.
 - This is displayed as someone who thinks they are powerless, they blame others, take no responsibility for their own actions, lack empathy for others, do not want solutions only acceptance of their situation, etc.
- When we act like this or encounter someone like this, Christ is the answer. When we forget who we are, we act like independent creatures who do not need God. (55)
- "Paul and Silas sang hymns in the Philippian jail. You can only do that if you have remembered that your welfare and freedom are in the hands of an all-powerful God who is your Father. Much of the drama of God's people is a drama of identity."

- Paul and Silas knew they were God's children. They knew that God was taking care of them. They knew that no matter what the prison system did to them God was in control.
 - When this is our mentality, we can, like them, sing praises to the Lord.
- There are only two options that Tripp points out, "Either I get my identity vertically, out of my sense of who God is and worship who he has made me in Christ, or I will seek to get my identity horizontally, out of my circumstances, relationships, and successes."
- When we seek our identity outside of Christ, it is going to constantly change with what others think about us, with what we think about us, with what the world thinks is best, and the list goes on and on.
- When we look to Christ to tell us who we are and where we stand in His overall economy, we are going to find stability, peace, joy, and a sense of purpose.
- **Hebrews 10:19-25** "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."
- Can you see all the identity language in these verses? Write out as many as you can.

- This was just one of his references in the book and just a drop in the bucket of all the NT says about us being now in Christ.
- As Tripp points out regarding the importance of knowing what we have in Christ, "3.) Much of the disappointment and heartache we experience is the result of our attempts to get something from relationships that we already have in Christ. In almost thirty years of counseling, I have talked with countless women in difficult marriages who said, "All I ever wanted was for my husband to make me happy." My first thought is invariably, Well, then, he's cooked!"
 - Your husband or best-friend cannot (not just won't but actually can't) give you what you already have in Christ or what you have available to you in Christ.
 - When you search for what you need from Christ in someone else, you both are going to be very disappointed and discouraged.

- As he says, “No human being was ever meant to be the source of personal joy and contentment for someone else.”
- You can’t find your Messiah by looking in this world or to other people. You must look to Christ.
- When we do this, he says, “I will be angry not because you are a sinner, but because you have failed to deliver the one thing I seek from you: identity.”
- We will all have this war within us until the Lord calls us home.
- We are never going to have a perfect relationship, but that should not stop us from living with others in relationships. When the goal is Christlikeness and not perfection, it makes even the hard times worth going through because we know there is a purpose.
- When we know that Christ is not just using the other person for me but also me for the other person, we can persevere because we love Christ and desire to see ourselves and others more like Him.

Remembering Who God Is (58-62)

- “Worship is first an identity before it becomes an activity. That is, you and I are worshipers, which is why we worship. Our hearts are always under the control of something, and whatever controls your heart will control your behavior.”
- **Matthew 6:19-24** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*. The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”
- We all live for something...what Jesus calls a treasure.
- That treasure is what will *always* control our hearts.
- Tripp points out, “Finally, Christ says that what controls our hearts controls our behavior (v. 24). If something is valuable to us, we will seek to get it through the situations and relationships of daily life.”
- In other words, we are going to work for what we hold dearest to us.
 - We will *always* find and have time and energy for what we desire the most.
 - We can say one thing but our actions will *always* tell us the true story.
- As Tripp points out, “This has many implications for relationships, because only when I am worshipping God for how he is am I able to love you as you are.”
- He makes this connection in three ways:

TO LOVE YOU AS I SHOULD, I MUST WORSHIP GOD AS CREATOR (58-60)

- After paraphrasing Psalm 139, Tripp makes the statement, “If I do not see the wise work of the Creator when I look at you, it will affect the way I relate to you.”
- God created that person and they are His image bearer.
- If we are dissatisfied with how God has created someone, we may have a desire to *recreate* them into our own image or into an image that we think is better.
- He points out, “If I am ever going to value who you are and benefit from our differences, I must look at you and see the wisdom of the Creator.”
- We should not strive for conformity but unity.
- Not unity around our likenesses but around Christ. We can celebrate the ways that He has made us different knowing that it is by those differences that we are united as one body under Him.

IF I AM GOING TO LOVE YOU AS I SHOULD, I MUST WORSHIP GOD AS SOVEREIGN (60-61)

- All of our stories are different. They all have different beginnings, middles, and most likely the same ending.
- “When I look at you, I need to see God’s sovereign hand writing your story perfectly. The person you are and the responses you make to life have been shaped by his sovereign choices and your responses to the story he has written for you. He determined that you would be part of the customs and culture of a certain ethnic group. He planned that you would be shaped by living in a certain geographical setting.”
- When we put our way of doing anything as better than someone else’s way without knowing them, we are in danger of living independently and outside of God’s given community for us.
- God knows what we need to be complete, we all have blind spots. If we continually view our own ways as superior, then we are going to miss out on what God is trying to do in our own hearts.
- When frustration and/or anger rises in our hearts because someone is not acting or thinking how we believe to be best, we need to ask ourselves if we know that person’s *actual* life story.
 - Do we know what their childhood was like? What is their marriage and current family like? Are we aware of traumas they have been through, either real or imagined in their minds?
- To simply believe that your better because of your culture or upbringing is not only prideful but also takes God’s sovereign hand out of the relationship all together.

TO LOVE YOU AS I SHOULD, I MUST WORSHIP GOD AS SAVIOR (61-62)

- “Worshiping God as Savior means that I acknowledge that I am a sinner in relationship with other sinners. I remember that you are still in the middle of God’s work of redemption—as am I. He is still convicting you, teaching you, and changing your heart. He is faithfully doing all these things at the best time and in the best way possible. None of us ever gets to be in relationship with a finished person.”

- This is all about perspective and knowing what is true. If we forget this truth, Tripp makes clear that we are going to end up, “self-righteous, impatient, critical, and judgmental.”
- He goes on to say, “When I fail to worship God as Savior, I am too casual about my sin and too focused on yours.”
- He ends with a profound question that may be at the root of much or all our relationship issues... “*Are you trying to do work in someone’s life that only the Savior can do?*”

CHAPTER 7: TALK

Galatians 5:15 “But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”

- Most interpreters, since at least Chrysostom argue that Paul is here using the imagery of animals biting and then devouring one another: “The comparison describes mad beasts fighting each other so ferociously that they end up killing each other.” Paul using animal behavior to picture partisan strife. Bickering and infighting among believers, Paul warns, can lead to destruction—presumably the destruction of the health and witness of the Christian community¹
- All three verbs Paul used to describe their unholy uncivil war on one another—biting, devouring, being destroyed—were bywords commonly used in Hellenistic Greek to suggest wild animals engaged in deadly struggle. Obviously Paul was writing to churches caught in a serious theological conflict over the doctrines of the false teachers²
- Paul was also worried that the Galatians were eating one another alive. The words “bite” and “devour” suggest that they were acting like a pack of wild animals. Their behavior was beastly. Ben Witherington comments that here Paul “describes a clear progression—first the animal bites the prey, then it tears at the flesh of the victim, then finally it consumes its prey.” When the Galatians traded liberty for license, it turned out to be a license to kill. Conflict in the church is a kind of spiritual suicide. Sin is always self-destructive, and the sin of divisiveness inevitably leads to the destruction of the church. It means the death of Christian witness and fellowship.³
- These are just some thoughts on **Galatians 5:15** and the importance of knowing that our words carry meaning **and** that our words always have consequences.
- We must put much effort into what is coming into our hearts and minds so that we can be very careful about what is coming out of our mouths.
- As Tripp points out, we all, from time to time, say things that we don’t mean...but that is the exception.

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 349.

² Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 384.

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 218–219.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT WORDS? (65-66)

- How much time, energy, and thought do we put into the words that we say to one another throughout the normal course of the day?
- Not too much? “Perhaps this is because we think communication *is* ordinary.”
- Since we communicate to one another largely in “meaningless” contexts and ways, “it is easy to underestimate its significance.”
- Most of us will never say something that is so life-changing that we are encouraged to write a book or start a speaking tour.
- We only think in the big picture mentality. We normally think about the top-down view. We don’t always think about how our speech is going to impact the individual in the forest...we generally just think about talking to the forest.
- **Example:** To the forest...*why is dinner not ready when I get home?*
- **Example:** To the trees in the forest...*is everything okay right now? You usually have dinner ready, but since you don't today, did something happen to you?*
- Tripp writes about our communication, “Your everyday communication influences the shape, quality, and direction of your relationships.”
- In the above-mentioned example, how do the two different ways to talk influence the shape, quality and direction of a relationship.

- “Everyday you tell people what you think about them, what you want from them, and what you would like to enjoy with them.”
- Since much of our communication is not “in grand moments of oratory,” we must be aware of those much smaller and seemingly insignificant moments of communication.
- “It is easy to forget the impact our words have on every relationship. There has never been a good relationship without good communication. And there has never been a bad relationship that didn’t get that way in part because of something that was said.”
- With such weight, power, and impact that our words have, we should be more careful with what words we are choosing to use at any given time.
- When is the last time you thought about how your words (both good and bad) have shaped relationships that you either currently have or had in the past?

- While we are not to mull over conversations, it is helpful to know where a relationship with either strengthened by our words or it came crashing down because of our words.
- I like where Tripp points us, “...we invite you to look at your words through the lens of Scripture.”
- Have you ever thought about or studied what the Bible has to say about our speech?
- “The Bible does not consider this area of life ordinary and unimportant. In fact, it does the opposite. It assigns words the extraordinary value they actually deserve.”
- If we desire our thinking on the massive importance of words, then we must go to the Scriptures and learn what the Bible has to say about both good and poor communication.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ON OUR WORDS (66-68)

- “The Bible can help you diagnose where you are in your talk and how to get where you need to be.”
- The Bible is not just about do say this and don’t say that.
- Reread Tripp’s quote, the Bible is not just a diagnostic tool, there to identify the nature, cause or location of a problem. The Bible is so much more!
- The rest of Tripp’s quote, the Bible also tells us how to get to where you need to be.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
- “Holy Scripture presents a kind of mirror to the eyes of the mind, so that our inner self may see its appearance” (St. Gregory the Great, 6AD – 7AD)
- Since our words come from our inner man, we need the Bible to show us what our inner man is doing, how we can destroy and build up.

Our Words Have Power (66-67)

- **Proverbs 18:21** “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”
- “This illustrates the constructive and destructive power of words while alerting us to the fact that our words always have direction. They are going either toward life or toward death.”
- While our words do not fatally wound someone, they can leave unseen marks for years or even a lifetime to come.
- Even the secular world has this thought:
 - Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941)—not the *Star Trek* character—was an early 20th-century American linguist who proposed that the way we perceive the world is influenced by the language we speak.

Cognitive therapists recognize that pinning negative labels on ourselves is a type of cognitive distortion that can affect our moods and how we feel about ourselves.⁴

- I could go on and on about this, but even those without Christ know that there is really power in words that are spoken and that one should be very careful about what is said.
- “Because our words have power and direction, they always produce some kind of harvest.”
- **Thoughts?** _____

- “It will be a life harvest of comfort, encouragement, hope, insight, unity, and joy, or a death harvest of fear, discouragement, falsehood, division, and sadness. Words can open up the mysteries of the universe for someone. Words can crush a person’s spirit, excite, anger, or stimulate love. Words have power.”

Our Words Belong to the Lord (67)

- “Language is not a human invention to be used in whatever way serves our interests.”
- Thinking about words at a broader perspective, God uses words to both describe Himself to us and to communicate to us what He desires.
- In our modern day, there are two movements in the “church” which seek to undermine an accurate understanding of God’s Word.
 - One is the Progressive Church.
 - This movement does not believe the Bible to be 100% without error...they reject inerrancy.
 - They would describe Scripture as a “spiritual travel journal” there to tell us how those in ancient history understood and related to God in their own time and place.
 - They would also use the Wesley Quadrilateral approach to understanding:
 - **Scripture:** The foundational text, but subject to critique.
 - **Tradition:** The wisdom and history of the church.
 - **Reason:** Integrating scientific discoveries, historical scholarship, and logical analysis.
 - **Experience:** Valuing personal feelings, modern ethics, and social context as valid ways to discern God’s voice today.
 - Second is the Emergent Church:

⁴ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-minute-therapist/202407/the-psychological-power-of-words>

- While similar to the Progressive Church in that it does not believe the Bible to be the actual words of God to man, this movement goes farther and casts off truth all together.
- They believe that since humans are fallible, there is no way to know with full certainty propositional truth (that statements can be objectively verified as true or false).
- Instead of trying to figure out what the Bible says with any clarity and certainty, they would hold to the hermeneutic of humility. Stating that it is far better to be honest that we just can't fully know what words mean.
- The Bible as a whole is a narrative in which we are to read ourselves into and that our fullest (though not complete) understanding of the Bible comes from a community or group effort.
- Since each person has different experiences and each person interprets words through their experiences, each person is valuable to the overall goal of understanding.

- **Why do we need to know this when talking about relationships and words?**
- Tripp wrote, “Words separate you from the rest of creation, making you more like God than like animals. The gift of words calls us to live and speak in a God-focused manner. One of our greatest mistakes in communication is to take words as our own to use as we please.”
- Think again about the forest and the tree analogy. When the church (the forest) does not care about the words that are spoken. When those who are in the church (the trees) are being told that their words really can’t be known, there are going to be major issues.
- Just our ability to speak actual words separates us from the animals. While animals can certainly communicate with one another, they were not gifted with the same abilities that humans were to use letters, words, sentences, paragraphs to succinctly transmit information to one another.
- When we pay no attention to our words is when we potentially face larger problems.
- “Words, in short, have a high and holy calling.”
- Have you thought about the fact that God has given us words and that we are to be stewards of the words that we use on a daily basis?
- **Matthew 12:36** “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.”
- Our words reveal what is going on in our hearts. Even the *seemingly* careless words that we say on a daily basis will be brought before us so that we can give an account for them.
- Since words are from God and since God will call us to account for them, take care how you spend your time with words.
- They are gifts that can be used for either good or evil. As believers, we have the mind of Christ and the Spirit to help us with our self-control.

The World of Talk is a World of Trouble (67)

- **James 3:2** “For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”
- “With respect to one’s own affairs in life, if the tongue is controlled, general self-control will be the result. James asserted that controlled speech enables one to guide the whole body by the maturity of faith (cf. 1:26). The power of faith to bridle the tongue conveys a power to guide the activities of the body (as with the horse or ship, vv. 3–4). The sense of “guide” here is important, for it not only implies the curbing of evil action but also the directing of the body into good action.”⁵
- Our tongues are far more powerful than we can ever imagine. Our speech is going to “either guide the self into deeds of blessing or the deeds of cursing (cf. 3:10).”⁶
- As Tripp writes, “If you are honest, you have to admit that our words are the most powerful and consistent indicators of our need for the grace of Christ.”
- Since speech and actions go hand in hand, we really need grace.
- Listen to James’ words about the man who can bridle the tongue, he is *able to bridle the whole body as well*.
 - To bridle means to lead or to guide. Your words are going to guide or lead your actions. When we don’t have control over our words, our actions are also going to not be honoring to God.
- “James calls us to admit that our words are the most powerful and consistent indicators of our need for the grace of Christ.” **Thoughts? What words do you use that show your need for grace?**

Word Problems are Heart Problems (68)

- **Luke 6:45** “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; *for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.*”
- Ouch! Do you hear and feel the words of Jesus? Really listen to what He’s says...a good treasure in our hearts brings forth what is good and the evil treasure bring forth what is bad. Because of this, what comes out of our mouth is from the treasure in our hearts.
- The word *treasure* means “the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up.”
- If we do some reverse engineering, we take the words and then work back to the treasure. This is what Jesus is saying...listen to your words (or those spoken to you) and you will know the inner man.

⁵ Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 148.

⁶ Ibid.

- Think of it this way, what are you putting in your inner man treasure box. Maybe it's a good reputation, maybe it's a desire for people to like you, respect you, think you are important...maybe you want people to see you in a way that does not reveal who you truly are.
 - If this is true, then your words will be deflective, defensive, arrows which are flung to make sure that others can't get too close or can't see too much.
 - Do you talk about your own deeds so that people will know something that you think is important about you?
- Here's the other way. When we put the things of Christ in our inner man treasure box, the things of Christ come out. When we seek to put Christ's identifying markers in our inner man, then when we are personally challenged, we don't take offense.
 - It's okay if we're not the smartest guy in the room, we have Christ. It's okay if you offend people because you don't partake in their sinful events, your desire is to please the one you identify with; namely Christ.
 - It's okay if people know that you're not perfect, it allows you to point them to Christ.
- "Christ isn't saying that people never put their feet in their mouth and say something stupid. We all have. But he is asking us to own the connection between our thoughts, desires, and words. The real problem with your communication is what you want to say and why you want to say it, *which ultimately has nothing to do with your language skills*. Christ reveals that the what and the why are shaped by the heart. Therefore, if we hope to transform the way we talk with one another, the heart must change first."

Thoughts? _____

A RADICAL COMMITMENT TO THE CALL OF CHRIST (68-69)

- "God has an agenda for our relationships. For that reason, proper communication is not so much about getting what we want out of our relationships as it is being part of what God is seeking to do."
- In other words, we need to ask why God has us where we are and interacting with the people that He has in our life. Nobody is in your life by accident. God had people around you so that you are able to represent Him before the onlooking world.
- For all the people that we interact with and have a relationship with we are, as Tripp says, ambassadors of Jesus.
- **2 Corinthians 5:20** "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

- “An ambassador does one thing only – represent. His job is to incarnate a king who is not present. Every word he speaks is directed by the king’s interests and will”
- This means that our words should be carefully chosen so that we represent our King in the way that He desires, not just what we think is right and good.
- What is the goal of the ambassador sent by God?
- To appeal to a broken world to be reconciled to God. This means that our lives are no longer about ourselves but about what God desires to do in and through us.
- “God is working in every situation and relationship to reclaim our wandering hearts. He wants to make us a people who are more interested in what he wants for us than what we want for ourselves.”
- If we trace this back to our treasures stored in our hearts, we can see if this is our agenda or not.
- Do we treasure this...*to incarnate Christ our King to the world He has us in?*
- If we do, then our words are going to reflect that truth.
- But, as Tripp says, “...we lose sight of reconciliation in many ways: When you flatter your friend because you want her to like you. When you trim the truth to avoid a conflict. When you yell at your child about his messy room. When winning an argument is all you care about. When you indulge in gossip. When you are better at pointing out wrong than asking for forgiveness. When you use words to hurt someone rather than help him. When your communication stays resolutely impersonal. When your words make you the center of attention.”
- This is when we know that our treasure in our hearts is not from the King but focused on us. This is when we are no longer ambassadors for Christ, representing our King, but we are self-promoters and self-defenders looking to protect our own sovereignty.
- “Here is the point: Your words are always in pursuit of some kind of kingdom. You are either speaking as a mini-king, seeking to establish your will in your relationships and circumstances; or you are speaking as an ambassador, seeking to be part of what the King is doing.”
- One of the greatest points that Tripp makes is “As sinners we want what we want when we want it, and we often see others as obstacles. We treat words as if they belong to us, to be used to get what we want. When we face how powerful our self-interest is, we are confronted by the truth that only a change in our hearts can produce a change in our words.”
- I think this is so profound and most likely one of the most often times missed treasures that we all store in our hearts. *We want people to do what we want them to do and when they don’t, they are no longer fellow image bearers but obstacles that we need to manipulate, coerce, or move so that we can get our own way.*
- When we want our own way, we are willing to cast off our identity as ambassadors for Christ and take over our mini kingdom, sitting on our lonely throne of self.

TALKING LIKE AN AMBASSADOR (69-71)

- If we are to be an ambassador and our desire is to represent Jesus our King in the way that He desires, we must go the Scriptures and learn His way.
- **Ephesians 4:29-30** “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
- “If you want your words to reflect what God wants more than what you want, you should consider three things:

Consider the Person (“only what is helpful for building others up”)

- “Wholesome communication is other-centered communication.”
- “Paul says I should never say anything to you that is not helpful for you. Since God is focused on remaking you into his image, I should speak in a way that builds you up.”
- “I never want my words to be an obstacle to the work that God is doing.”

Consider the Problem (“according to their needs”)

- “Before I speak, I must think about what you are struggling with and what you most need. Do you need encouragement, comfort, hope, direction, wisdom, courage, rebuke, warning, forgiveness, patience, teaching, correction, thank, insight, a job description, or something else? **My words must be shaped by your need.**”

Consider the Process (“that it may benefit those who listen”)

- Ambassadorial communication is not just about the content of our words, but the manner in which they are spoken. Often we choose to say the right thing in the wrong way or at the wrong time. But the communication process, as much as the content of the words, needs to benefit the person. Confronting a teenager five minutes before she leaves for school is not helpful, even if the content is accurate. Rebuking a friend for an offense in front of others is not helpful. Asking your husband to consider how you hurt him as he is trying to get to sleep is not helpful.”

CONCLUSION

- “If we are ever going to give grace when we talk, we need grace to free us from our bondage to ourselves so that our words may be liberated to be used by God. Our relationships are workrooms for redemption.”