
Communication: talking in our one anothering

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Big Idea: Who we are in Christ characterizes how we speak to one another.

Introduction

When I was an unbeliever my sister and I talked to each other in terrible ways. When I became a believer and she as well we now talk to one another in tender ways. In the olden days we were mean spirited to one another. We spoke to each other as though we detested one another. But when God took us out of our pagan past and placed us into His beloved Son Jesus we now use our conversations not to tear down but rather build up each other. Why is this? A better question might be “how does this introduction relate to our present series on One Anothering? How do we use our talk in the family of God? Why is it critical for us this evening to closely follow the Bible’s view on Christians talking to one another? What does it sound like when we obediently use our mouths in serving one another? How would viewing our talk to each other as *Sibling Talk* change the way we talk to one another?

Tonight we continue our September series titled **One Anothering**. Our aim throughout these 8 talks is to help each of us to value the Biblical culture of one anothering. We recognize that whatever we prize we will pursue. Our intent throughout this series is to assist each of us to prize what the Bible prizes. Over 30 times the NT biblical authors use the phrase “one another”. They say things like, “love one another”, “give preference to one another”, “pray for one another”, and so forth. Tonight we will explore another angle on one anothering called Communication: Talking in our one anotherings.

Here’s the big idea for this evening. If you understand this sentence you get the gist of tonight’s message. *Who we are in Christ characterizes how we talk to one another*. Another way of saying this might be: Who we are dictates how we talk. You see, our conversations not only communicate words. They communicate identity – “you know the tree by the fruit it bears” kind of thing. What we talk about, how we talk about it and even why we talk tell others much about who we are. Perhaps this is a bit philosophical. A simple illustration may serve to clarify the big idea for tonight.

Some time back I was serving in the toddler nursery and had the privilege of enjoying two (or maybe 3) year olds. One toddler whose name is Rubin and I were reading a book. The book was on identifying animals by their sounds. I started. “Rubin, what does this animal say? “Moo”. That’s correct. It’s a cow. How about this one? “Ruff Ruff”. Yes, this is a dog. Trying to trick the little guy I said, “okay little smarty pants, what does the fish say? Rubin got his 100% A+ on the quiz by puckering up his lips and making the kissing sound. The point: Identity generates activity. A dog barks. A cat meows. And Christians talk to one another in a certain way. That is the topic for tonight. We will explore 6 basic expressions of sibling talk in our communicating with each other.

To get there we will take a quick road trip together. We will travel swiftly through the letter to the Colossians to get to a place where we see the truth that *who we are in Christ characterizes how we are to talk to one another*.

The message tonight is organized into two parts. The first part is 1) Who we are in Christ. We will spend but a brief time here to make plain the Christian's identity. This will lead us into the main piece to the message; part two: 2) how we talk to each other. We will explore 6 places in the Bible not to expound these passages per se but to get good definitions, clarifications and applications over how we talk in the family of God.

Let's pray and get started on "who we are as Christians".

Who we are in Christ

This road trip starts in Colossians 1:1. Please open your Bibles to Colossians 1:1 where we begin to understand how we are to talk to one another.

Paul greets the church in Colossae by saying:

[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, [2] To the saints and **faithful brothers in Christ** at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father**.

The apostle is quite clear at the start of his letter that Christians are "saints" because of the new relationship they have been brought into by God through Jesus Christ. This designation suggests a change in position that leads to a change in behavior. Their pagan past is gone. The life in Christ has come. They are set apart for God's enjoyment and agenda. They are sanctified in Christ which then leads to holy living.

Notice another term used of Christians in v2. This is the primary designation we are highlighting this evening. Christians are not only saints in Christ but also brothers/sisters. This means that all in Christ are siblings of one another in Christ and having one Father who is God. They wholeheartedly trust in Christ and as a result of believing they are in a new realm so that they can speak a new way. They are brought out of their old sphere of unbelief and all the talk that accompanies that identity and brought into the new man; the new Adam = Christ Himself = the new sphere in which living fellowship occurs. (To follow more closely Paul's theology in incorporation in Christ see 2:6-16.)

The road trip continues as we speed down the road to chapter three. In chapter 3, we notice a shift in emphasis. The emphasis shifts from who we are in Christ to how we are to behave for Christ. In v5-11 we notice the negative commands of "put to death" and "put off". Verses 7-9 form a summary of sorts. It says,

[7] In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. [8] But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

By means of the "once / now" distinction, Paul shows the Colossians how they ought to talk to one another in contrast to their past. Note the words in v9 *seeing that*. This signifies that the new nature, the new identity, the new society shapes and steers the new way of living. The old is gone and the new has come and now the brothers and sisters have both the instructions on how to talk to one another and the ability to actually talk that way to one another.

This newness of life called regeneration and subsequent conversion did not simply refer to individual salvation but as we see in verse 11, it also carries a community connotation. Our road trip through the letter to the Colossians ends HERE. Take a listen as I read 3:11

[11] Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

According to v11, “here” is the destination of regeneration. Here is the realm of the new man in which barriers that divide people from one another are abolished! Here, this new nature in Christ finds relational expression and application. Here, in the New Man we are brothers and sisters of one another. Here, is where we begin our sibling talk.

How we talk to one another

As we pivot now from who we are in Christ to how we are to talk to one another, the first expression of sibling talk is found in the passage we’ve looked at so far. Col.3:9 paraphrasing says, “Seeing that you have a new nature in a new realm with a new family... The guiding question for the remainder of this message is: how then shall we talk to one another?

Do not lie to one another – Colossians 3:9

The first expression of sibling talk for our interest is found in this verse. “Do not lie to one another”. That seems basic and a no brainer. Since we are siblings of each other due to our Father in heaven we mustn’t lie to one another. But this prohibition carries more insight than simply “come on, tell the truth. Who took the last cookie”. Sure we are to confess should we have taken the last cookie at Flock night. But what Paul is after is more profound and helpful than this.

In a parallel letter to Colossians, Paul writes similarly by saying “speak truth to one another”. In this section Paul refers to speaking the gospel to one another. We are to speak good and accurate and wonderful things about God and Christ and reality to one another. We are to constantly retell the old, old story in brand new ways. We never are to promote a secular view of life for each other to consider. Do not lie to one another. We never are to advance myths to one another so that we believe a lie. NO! No not lie to one another is a way of saying “brothers and sisters believing a lie has consequences. Truth matters. We need to care for each other’s thought life” .

And so, never distort the gospel to each other. Never allow your siblings to believe a lie from the devil. Stop the myth. Mute the serpent’s strategy to foster in our Family the notion that God is not loving toward His children and that He is holding back the best things for himself. Do not lie to one another. Do not take on the dialect of the devil. Let us never be a conduit piping the message “God is a kill joy” “God is unjust” “God is irrelevant” “God is dead”. Sibling talk never endorses falsehood for their brothers and sisters to believe. Sibling talk always promotes gospel talk. Our first expression of sibling talk then is DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER.

Do not speak evil against one another – James 4:11

The second expression of sibling talk is found in James 4:11. It reads:

[11] Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of

the law but a judge. [12] There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

In this context, James warns the church of worldliness. He uses in two sentences the term brothers 3x letting us know that there is a way of speaking to our brothers and sisters. And speaking against each other is not the way to speak to one another. This form of worldliness is generated from self-righteous pride. When we are prideful we look down on the siblings. We are critical of each other. We make conclusions with little basis. We determine outcomes that are to be left with God alone.

The idea of speaking evil against one another is akin to slander. This sinful use of language is the “behind the back” kind of stuff. When we are involved in this sin we talk about each other to each other in a way that leads each other to conclude poorly about each other. Things like: “Have you seen who Bobby is dating”? hinting at Bobby’s character flaws. “Did you see how Kathy dressed for church the other Sunday”? hinting at Kathy’s malignant motives. “I don’t know if you noticed the new tattoo on James’ arm”. hinting at James’ destructive destination.

Brothers and sisters, let us not talk against one another. Beware of a prideful, self-righteous heart leading the mouth to speak against one another. Because of our Big Brother; King Jesus, and what He created through His death and resurrection – namely a new family of set apart brothers and sisters – because of the gospel let us have each other’s best interest at heart. When we talk about each other to one another may it be words of encouragement and blessings. When we have concerns over each other let us go to one another privately to tentatively discuss our observations. Absolutely. But let us make much of Jesus Christ by simply not speaking against one another.

Do not grumble against one another – James 5:9

Our third expression of sibling talk is found in James 5. Picking up the thought in verse seven we hear:

[7] Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. [8] You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] **Do not grumble against one another, brothers**, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

This prohibition “do not grumble against one another” can be like white noise in the family of God. When grumbling becomes a constant, steady, unvarying sound like I75 traffic rolling by the Chapel we almost forget that grumbling is a sin. In his good book *Respectable Sins*, Jerry Bridges writes, “Have we become so preoccupied with the major sins of our society that we have lost sight of our need to deal with our own more subtle sins...such as jealousy, anger, pride, unthankfulness, impatience, irritability...”?

The passage in which we find this command talks about trusting the LORD with His work and being patient in times of difficulty. The God-guided difficulties of our life may be with a manager at work or with a school teacher or with your aging body or with your president or with your

Elders or with your marriage or with your parents or with car or with your... you fill in the blank. When are you tempted to grumble against people in general but more so your siblings specifically? Pay attention to how you talk. Slow down and think. Locate your moments of vulnerability. Listen to the words of your heart. Rehearse the gospel for your wellbeing. Soften your heart toward one another by being refreshed in God and his grace. Complaining against each other is not okay.

To honor our siblings, to honor our heavenly father, to make much of the cross of Christ – let us not grumble against one another.

Be kind to one another – Ephesians 4:32

So far we've covered some "do not's" of the Christian talk – do not lie, do not speak against, do not grumble against... So are we to conclude that staying away from negative expressions to one another is enough? Don't say this and don't say that and brothers and sisters in Christ will be loved and honored. Right? Thanks be to God there is much more than mere prohibitions. We will conclude our talk this evening with three positive expressions we are to provide each other in our conversations with one another.

First, found in Ephesians 4:32 we come across **be kind to one another**. This verse says: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted... (v32a) This expression of sibling talk hardly needs much commentary. In a passage Pastor Tim Nixon recently preached we heard that love is "patient and kind" toward each other. He went on to teach us that these terms represent respectively love's necessary passive and active responses toward each other. The former is a picture of long forbearance toward one another. The idea here is holding back words that will not be helpful to one another. Kindness, on the other hand, is active. It releases words that are well timed and helpful. Be kind to one another will be seen in the thousand fold expressions of mercy.

Just recently, I was loved by kindness. In preparation for this message I noticed that this biblical idea of kindness begins with this two-fold description of God who through Christ shows himself patient and kind toward those who deserve divine judgment (Rom.2:4). I stopped my studies and pondered kindness from God through His Word and people to me. I thought of the time when I was impatient in a meeting and an elder said kind and clear words to me that were merciful. I changed. I thought on when I was short with Lisa and she talked with me kindly – words I didn't deserve and yet humbly received. My heart softened. I thought upon how many sermons coming cogently through this pulpit have landed on me with conviction through kindness / grace / mercy. My heart tenders as kind words fall on me like gentle rain upon young plants.

Since He is our Father and He uses His words kindly toward us who do not deserve this treatment how much more should we represent Him and reflect Him to one another through our kind words toward one another.

Admonish one another – Colossians 3:16

The next positive expression of sibling talk is taken from Colossians 3:16 which says:

[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom...

Our 5th expression highlighted today is Admonish one another. Admonishing one another is rare these days; rare like a rare jewel. You know, hard to find but oh so precious. Admonition is a word

many of us don't use on a daily basis. It basically means to warn one another when necessary. It doesn't mean that something is dreadfully wrong in which case we must confront and even rebuke one another. It can be used in this fashion. But generally admonition is a form of teaching. It's like a traffic sign that says "slippery when wet". Wise drivers hear the caution, take the warning to heart and adjust the speed according to the conditions. The sign isn't assuming that you are going too fast. It is just teaching us wisdom to use when necessary. I hear our men when they travel for business from time to time addressing one another by saying, "remember, be careful out there". This is admonition. It is a warning that danger lurks in certain places. And the wise hear this and are benefited much by this. They say, "thank you". They take it to heart. And when they are going through a terminal anonymously and pass the "newsstand" they remember the admonition. They sense "there's danger in there". They take precautions. They go safely through the airport and are happy to be back in the arms of their spouse as a result of God-enabled obedience.

Are we admonishing one another in increasing ways? I find that some people think this is none of their business to admonish their siblings. Or maybe they are simply too afraid to talk a warning to assist another brother or sister. Let this one another at Clearcreek Chapel not be rare in the sense that it is hard to find. But let this one another at the Chapel be rare in the sense of being so precious to each of us. My brothers and sisters, let us admonish one another.

Sing to one another – Colossians 3:16

We come to our final characteristic of living lives together as siblings as we make one more observation on Col.3:16 Listen again as I read v.16.

[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Notice that one of the ways we teach and admonish one another according to this verse is to sing to one another. This will stand tonight as our last expression of sibling talk. My brothers and sisters let us sing to one another.

I can almost hear your thoughts right now. "What in the world is Turner talking about? I'm not going to serenade my spiritual siblings. That's just plain weird". I understand. Pls. give me three minutes of your time to try to explain.

In the 1st century, the church had few copies of God's Word. People were not toting around OT in their back packs. And the NT was still being written and the canon wasn't closed until the end of the apostolic period around the end of the 1st century. Furthermore, many in the church of Colosae were illiterate. How are they going to take what the Apostle Paul gave them and take the Christ-centered teachings of the OT and share these findings with each other? Well, according to this verse, we see how in part they did it. Mutual instruction and admonition took place as they took the Word and created songs to sing when they gathered together. They were not all musicians. They did not have a Doug-like, Mark-like, Linda-like trained voice. They simply had the Word of Christ dwelling richly in them and among them. They loved Christ. And humans love to express their loves. They sang unto the Lord with thankful hearts. And as they sang they filled their humble house with lyrics that were shaped by the Scriptures and the Spirit. This gives me great hope that

common people like Dan Turner can instruct one another and give grace and joy to one another as he sings with one another.

Let us not hold back as some are in the habit of doing. Let us not make excuses. Let us make melody. Some of you I'm afraid violate this command. You are too preoccupied with yourself. You are nervous how others will receive your song. Simply take your eyes off of self and put them on the Savior. Concentrate on the words of these rich songs our worship team provides. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you. And then, open your mouths and obey this One Anothering. Siblings in Christ love to gather together and collectively sing for joy. This atmosphere is part of our One Anothering. Let us Sing to one another.

Conclusion

For reflection and response to this message think with me over how this word can apply to the following areas. Take a moment and review the six expressions of Sibling Talk shown on the screen. Are these functioning in ever increasing ways: (tease out some ideas for each of the following groups to conclude the message)

- Among the Elders
- Among your Flock
- Among your family