

The Wise and the Tongue

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. Good morning. My name is Chris, and I'm a teaching pastor here at Watermark. If this is your first time here, if it's your hundredth time here, we're just really excited for you to be here. I know some of you I can see coming back from vacation. Some people are still on vacation, but it's just really exciting to be here. It's sunny. We've got a community lunch afterwards, and it's just great to be in God's presence together. I don't know about you, but every single one of us walked in here this morning carrying a weapon. It's a weapon of such power that it can have explosive impact more than a nuclear bomb in the hands of King Jong-un.

tongue. It's a weapon which changes things. I'm talking about the tongue, if you weren't aware.

You see, people estimate that you and I will speak between 120 and 850 million words in our lives. That's enough to fill the pages of between 150 and 1,085 Bibles just with your words.

And if you included texts, you included Facebook messages, emails, you and I speak a lot, right? And our culture knows that words have power. You know, the CEO, the former CEO of Google, Eric Schmidt said about Steve Jobs, he said, he could persuade me of things I didn't even believe in.

That's what he said, because we know words have power. And if you think about it, every single major movement that has ever happened in the whole of history has always been launched with words.

[1 : 5 9] Whether it's the Nazis in Germany, whether it's the civil rights movement in the States, whether it's the Communist Party in China, every movement, words have launched it because words shape the world.

And we're looking at the book of Proverbs. We've been going through it over the summer. And this is just a very challenging what Proverbs tells us about the tongue.

Proverbs 18, 21 says this, Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Did you get that? Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

And you may think that's a little bit exaggerated, but I don't know if you've watched the news and seen the number of kids who've committed suicide because of the words of others. You know, just two weeks ago in the States, there was that girl, 18-year-old, got sentenced for encouraging a kid to commit suicide, her boyfriend, because words truly do have the power of life and death.

And you know, we say things like, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me, which is a complete lie, right? We know that's a lie.

[3 : 1 3] Like, we have words right from very young which still shape our lives even to this day, words that have been spoken to us. You know, when I was young, I was a fairly confident, non-self-conscious kid. And then one day in one of the class, one kid in my class said something like this.

He said, do you get good TV reception with ears that big? And do you know what I did? The first thing I did was I went into the mirror and looked.

It was kind of like, they're not that big. But the words had begun to eat themselves down into my heart. And so even today, and I only realized this as I was preparing this, when I go to get a short haircut, those words are still in the back of my mind, even to this day, because words have power.

And I suspect most of us in this room have words from our past which equally shape us. You know, much of our workaholism, much of our dieting, much of the amount of time we spend in the bathroom is all shaped by words people have said to us.

And we often don't even realize it. And you know, sometimes it's not just the words that are said, it's also the absence of words that can affect us.

[4 : 33] Because you know, some of you, you desperately wanted your father and mother to comfort you when you were young, but they stayed silent. Words have power in our lives.

And the Bible story that we keep talking about is a story about words. You know, when God creates the world, what does he do?

He speaks. He says, light, and there's light. He says, there's trees, and there's trees. He says, chickens, and there's chickens. Because when God speaks, his words create reality.

And words fuel change because we are image bearers of a God whose words create reality and change life.

You know, I don't know if you've noticed when a one-year-old, or kind of around that age, suddenly starts kind of gurgling some sounds out, you know, you know, you know. And the parents, really interesting, parents all suddenly very excited, crowd round, thinking, is that his first words?

[5 : 41] What did he say? I think it was garam masala. Or like someone else would be like, geometry. I don't know what it was, but we get so excited that someone's going to be saying their first words.

Why? Because words are what helps us enter into relationship with people. We're longing for a deepened relationship with our child.

And now we're thinking, now we can communicate. Because words are about relationships. And when God speaks to us, it's grace that he speaks.

He could stay silent, but he doesn't. Because he longs for life-giving, refreshing relationship with us.

That's what his words are about. If you go through the Bible story, you see it. To Abraham, God speaks promises of blessing. To Moses, he speaks words of instruction.

[6 : 39] To David, he speaks promises of hope. To Israel, he warns them of danger. To the demons, he speaks and they go. To sickness, Jesus speaks and they're healed. To the shamed, he speaks and they're forgiven and they're cleansed.

And when people were leaving Jesus because his words were getting too intense for them, he turns to his disciples and he says, hey, do you guys want to go as well?

And do you know what they say? They say, where else are we going to go, Jesus? You have the words of eternal life. It's all about words in the Bible story.

But if you remember back in Genesis 3, there's a serpent. Satan. Shatan in Hebrew.

What's the first thing that Satan does? What does he do? First thing? He speaks. What does he say?

[7 : 42] He says, did God really say that? And everything that Satan does in the Bible is to undermine God's word. Everything is to undermine the relationship with God and with each other.

That's what he's doing all the way through. Jesus says it like this. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. And he does it through words. He does it through words.

You know, the word Satan in the Bible, do you know what it means? It means the accuser. And in Greek, the word devil, which is diabolos, means the slanderer.

And Jesus himself says when talking about the devil, he says, you know, lying is his second nature because he's the father of lies. You see, right in the Bible story, right at the heart of it, is a war of words.

And Proverbs states the war like this. He says, your words can be life or death. They can be healing or hurting. They can be blessing or cursing.

[8 : 46] They can build up people or they can tear people down. You choose. So we're going to look at this challenging topic today as we continue our series.

And we're going to examine the fruit of words. We're going to look at the heart of words and the healing of words and the healing through our words. Okay?

Fruit, heart, healing, and then using our words to heal others. Okay? You with me so far? Good. If you have your bulletin, have your bulletin open.

There's a lot of passages there. We're not going to look at all of them. But I want to kind of pick out a few just so you get a flavor of what Proverbs is really telling us about the tongue and about words. Okay?

Proverbs 18, verse 20. It's on the other side of your sheet. It says, What he's saying is, Your mouth is always producing something.

[9 : 56] Okay? It's never neutral. Your mouth is producing either the fruit of life or the fruit of death. It's like a, if you take a picture, it's like a mango tree.

Okay? Mangoes are continually coming out of your mouth if you take the image. Okay? Maybe that's a little strange for you. But bear with me. Bear with me.

But if you're continually offering rotten mangoes to somebody else, he's saying, Don't expect to get fresh ones back. Because the word satisfied doesn't actually mean fully satisfied.

It means you're going to get back the harvest that you sowed. The yield that you sowed. And that's going to be shaped by what you say.

And so he says, If you want to be refreshed in your relationships, then give refreshment to others with your words. If you want conflict, it's easy. Just speak words of anger and you'll soon get the fruit of it.

[10 : 57] That's what he's saying. And if you think about it, I don't know if you're in relationships that you're part of, but there's often this kind of crazy cycle that occurs.

You know, you come home from work. You've had a long day. You've skipped lunch. You're starving at the end of the day. If you've got a helper, your helper's away. And you know that your spouse has been back home at least two hours before you.

And all you want to do is just put your feet up, just have something to eat, just settle back for the night. And you walk in the front door and you smell nothing.

Anyone been there? And you go up to your spouse. There's literally nothing ready. And your spouse says to you, Sorry, food's not ready because I was just doing some online shopping.

At that moment is a life and death moment. Right? It's a harvest moment.

[12 : 02] So what would I say? You know, why isn't the food ready? What have you been doing for the last two hours? And the reply of love and grace comes, What am I, your slave?

And they say, Don't you know how hard I've been working for this family all these years? And what's beginning to go on there? What am I offering?

Life? I'm offering rotten mangoes. And what am I getting back? I'm getting back. Death. In my life. And what's happening in that relationship is, if we're not careful, the spiral of death can keep going.

And you know, in marriage counseling, what you realize is, marriages don't break down from just one poor decision. It's a thousand little moments of death that take place in our lives, and are never checked.

A thousand little, Why are you always late? Do I have to do everything? That person's spouse can do it so much better than you. Right?

[13 : 08] Death, death, death, death, death. And you know, when I'm on my good moments, I hold my tongue. But inside, those same words are kind of internally spewing through my mind.

And so, I sullenly withdraw. My body language speaks, even if my words don't. Proverbs 12, 18 says this, There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Wow, this is a challenging verse, I tell you. The word rash means impulsive. It means allowing your emotions to steer your tongue rather than thinking before you speak.

That's what it means. And what he's saying is, when your emotions are the steering wheel of your tongue, your words are like a sword which pierces into people and wounds them.

Anyone convicted by that? You know, you go into your kid's bedroom, they have a test tomorrow. What are they doing? Computer games, texting friends, no revision. Your blood is beginning to boil because you've told them 15 times to do it.

[14 : 33] It's a life and death moment. And you see, if you seek to bring correction when you're angry, instead of waiting until you've calmed down to deal with it, what happens?

We let fly. And when we let fly, the fruit we pick is either anger or emotional withdrawal or even guilt ourselves because we think afterwards, why did I say that?

Anyone know what I'm talking about? Words are powerful because they bear fruit. But the fruit of words comes out of the heart of words.

That's what I want to go to next. The heart of words. Proverbs 16, 23 and 24. The first verse says this.

The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Okay?

[15 : 37] The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. You know when the Bible talks about the heart, it's not talking about kind of Hollywood, just emotions.

It's actually saying in the Old Testament, your heart is really the inner command center of your life. It's where you're thinking, you're feeling, your decisions actually are made.

And so, the paradigm is you have a physical body and you have a heart. And your heart is like the steering wheel which guides your body. Okay? That's the image. And when it says the heart of the wise makes his lips judicious, the word judicious means prudent, having the wisdom to know what to say at the right time and what not to say.

And he says wisdom comes out of your heart. Because whether the fruit of life comes out, whether the fruit of death comes out, is shaped by what's going on in your internal root system down below.

You know, Jesus says it like this. He says in Luke 6, no good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. But the good person brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart.

[16 : 56] And the evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. And here's the thing. For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Out of the overflow of your heart the mouth speaks. I don't know if you can put up a little diagram. Paul Tripp, who some of you know, he came here a few years ago.

He's a counselor in the States. He has this diagram to show us what happens in our lives. In our lives we have the heat of life which is the situations we face.

Your kids not doing the homework, that sarcastic comment from your colleague. Whatever it is, it's the trigger for a response. And what comes out of your response can be thorns or it can be good fruit.

Rotten mangoes are good mangoes. fruit comes out ultimately from the root of what is at the bottom of those trees.

[18 : 01] And we reap the consequences of what flows in and out of our roots into our words. You know, he tells a story of when he went to an extended family reunion.

And when he was there, his uncle had got incredibly drunk and was kind of coming out with all kinds of very sexually explicit language.

And his mom grabs him and his brother and rushes them to the car, sits them in back, and just before he's about to drive off, she says to them this thing that they never forgot.

He says, I want to say something to you and I want you never to forget it. There's nothing that comes out of the mouth of a drunk that wasn't there in the first place. There's nothing that comes out of the mouth of a drunk that wasn't there in the first place.

That's what Jesus is saying. You see, it wasn't alcohol that made him say those things. Alcohol just loosened his lips. And with his lips loosened, out came his heart.

[19 : 03] You see, your word problems are heart problems. I remember a little while ago with Fiona and I had to go to a party.

We were late. Fiona was sharing about a real challenge she was having at work. It was a really tough situation and, you know, I got the point after a few minutes. I was caring, compassionate, but then she kept talking and kept sharing.

And I was looking at my watch and it's getting later and later and later. And I was biting my tongue, you know, loving husband. And I'm thinking, come on, come on, we've got to go.

We're going to be late. And after 20 minutes had gone past, finally I'd had enough and out of my frustration I said two loving, deeply compassionate words in Cantonese.

I said, which means, got to go. And I stood up and I started walking towards the door. You can imagine the conversation going to the party was filled with life and love and grace.

[20 : 17] It wasn't. But I realized something. In my two words, the two words, I had expressed something far more profound than what I'd actually said in the words.

What I was saying was, I was saying, I'm not interested in your issues. I was saying, me being on time is more important than you. That's what I was saying.

I was saying, my heart wants to get my way and if I can't be the one who gets in my way, then I've got to, I've got to say something. I've got to do something to fix the situation because your problems are getting in my way of being on time.

That's what I was saying. And so, afterwards, do you know what? I apologize and I say things like, hey, I'm sorry I was insensitive. I'm sorry I was impatient.

Do you realize that's not actually a true apology? Because what am I apologizing? I'm apologizing for the fruit but I'm not apologizing for the root of my heart because what I needed to say was, hey, I'm sorry for being the kind of person who puts myself before you.

[21 : 41] I'm sorry for being the kind of person who has to have things his own way. That's what I needed to apologize for. And you know, if you're angry, Proverbs tells you, you read the verses, it tells you, hold your tongue.

Learn to count to ten, do whatever it takes like to stop yourself digging yourself into a grave. Okay? Do that. But realize just a bit of extra discipline is only a band-aid that you're putting on a temporary band-aid which isn't dealing with the real issues which are going on in your heart.

Our words reproduce fruit and our words flow from our hearts. But now let's talk about the healing of words. John Newton, who many of you have heard of the hymn Amazing Grace, who, he wrote that hymn, he was a slave trader, he said this, and this is just really challenging, he said, there is perhaps no one test or proof of the reality of a work of grace upon the heart more simple, clear, and infallible than the general tenor of our language and conversation.

No more proof of the reality of grace working in your heart than what comes out of your mouth. The 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon said this, the grace of God sweetens a man's tongue and if his religion does not operate upon his speech, surely it isn't the religion of the pure and holy God.

And I thought about that, that sounds a little extreme, doesn't it? And then I read in the book of James which says, if anyone thinks he's religious and yet you can't control your tongue, your religion is worthless.

[23 : 41] Now do you get what he's saying? He's saying, and he's not saying this to condemn us, he's saying this, he's saying your conversation, what you talk about, how you talk about it, the words and the tone that you use are the demonstration of how much you've understood and embraced the gospel in your life.

He's saying if harshness and criticalness and complaining is all that comes out, that's evidence that you need more of the gospel in your life. Proverbs 15, 28 says this, the heart of the righteous ponders how to answer but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

The heart of the righteous changes how they respond, how they use words, so who are the righteous? The righteous are those who are in a right relationship with God.

They're the good tree that Jesus was talking about. They're those who recognize their utter need for Jesus to save them even from their mouths and their hearts and they've heard Jesus' words of life in the gospel and they've put their trust in him and they fill their hearts with his grace, with his word, with his promises and they trust ultimately in God's final word to us which is Jesus himself.

And you know, I don't know where you are. I don't know where you are in your relationship with God. If you're like, I don't know if I'm one of the righteous. The Bible says, today is the day where you've got to run to Jesus, run to him and say, God, I don't understand, maybe I don't even know whether you're real or not but please show me because you've got to save me from my words which may destroy more people.

[25 : 48] But if you know that as a Christian, you are one of the righteous, the righteous want their speech patterned after Jesus and they think about him. You know, so if you look through how Jesus uses his words, it's extraordinary.

You know, when Peter, Peter says to Jesus, you're the Messiah and Jesus says to him, he affirms him, he says, blessed are you, Peter, because God, my Father, revealed this to you.

A moment later, Peter's trying to run his own world, his way and then he says, and Jesus says to him, he rebukes him, he says, get behind me, Satan. He's not afraid to correct.

Then in the Garden of Gethsemane, the moment of absolute loneliness and suffering for Jesus, Jesus asks his disciples, hey, would you pray with me? Would you be with me? Would you support me during this time?

And he goes off and prays and he comes back and what happens? They're all falling asleep. And so Jesus at that moment comes to them and comes to Peter and says to him, what kind of a friend are you?

[26 : 53] How do you treat me when I need you the most? Is that what he says? No. It's extraordinary. He says, Peter, I know you mean well. You're just weak.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. And he just shows him grace. And then he gets to the cross and he's nailed there and he's spat upon and he's mocked with words of hatred and contempt and accusation and the sword thrusts of people's words are piercing just as your words and my words pierce others and pierce his heart too.

And he says those incredible words. He says, Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing. I've wondered for a long time.

What on earth he means by that statement. Have you thought about it? They don't know what they're doing. Of course they know what they're doing. They're killing him. They're mocking him.

That's not an accident. Why does Jesus say that? Well, because when the rotten fruit is being thrown at him, how does he respond? But he responds with a beautiful fruit of forgiveness and grace and kindness and love because, and here's the thing, because his heart is so deeply entrenched in the Father's love for him.

[28 : 27] You know, the words that his Father speaks over him. You see how the relationship within the Trinity works? At the baptism of Jesus, do you know what the Father says to him? He says, You are my son whom I love.

With you I am well pleased. That's the words Jesus soaks in. He's got deep affirmation from the Father's love so when words pierce him, he's not responding with revenge but he's responding with grace.

That's the key to our heart change. That you know the love of God and his words in your life. that's what will sweeten your tongue.

And I don't know, some of us may feel like we've blown it with our words. Not just once but many, many times. And you wonder whether you can actually ever change really.

Because you see the carnage of your words and you feel like you've lost the battle. But there's an amazing thing the Bible says it's the devil who's the accuser and the condemner.

[29 : 36] It's not Jesus. And what God wants to do in your heart and in my heart is to work a process of deep heart level repentance.

That you may have to do again and again and again. But as you do that, as you soak in the gospel of Jesus' love for you, He's going to change you.

He's going to sweeten your tongue. He will. And what repentance means, it means owning our self-centeredness. Stop blaming on others.

You know, I was tired. If you hadn't have said that, I wouldn't have said that. That is denial. That's not heart level repentance. You know, many of us, including myself, don't often realize how we sound to other people.

Have you realized that? I've realized that. You know, my wife just really helps me with this. Because sometimes I think I'm just being honest and my wife says, hey, you know, that sounds really harsh. And here's something I think all of us need to do.

[30 : 43] If you want to really work in a deep heart repentance in your life, let me ask you to do something which is painful. Repentance requires you to hate your sin and to hate the consequences.

So ask your spouse, ask a good friend, ask even your older children, when I speak, how does it sound to you? How do I come across?

And be ready for whatever comes back. Without trying to justify yourself, without trying to defend yourself, because that may be the most useful feedback you get to lead you to really understanding how much you need Jesus.

Because if you go back to the diagram, you saw that when we run back to the cross, and we receive his forgiveness, the words he speaks over us are the words that God speaks over, his father spoke over him, you are my beloved son or my beloved daughter.

With you I am well pleased. Not well pleased because of your word, but well pleased because you're mine. And I've given you everything for you to get back up and for you to live a life that pleases me.

[32 : 04] The fruit of our words comes out of our hearts, but the healing of our words comes out of knowing the gospel, walking back in repentance again and again, massaging it into our lives.

Over time, we will be sweetened in our tongues. So let me come on to our final point. Because as God works that work in your own heart, what he wants to do is he wants to use us and to have words which actually bring healing to others.

Proverbs 15 verse 4 says this. A gentle tongue is a tree of life.

A gentle tongue is a tree of life. And you look through some of the other passages you'll say it says gracious words. Gracious words are just like honeycomb. It says they're sweet to the soul, they're health to the body.

You see this, your words can be used in an amazingly powerful way to bring healing. Because when you hear that word the tree of life, where does that come from?

[33 : 20] Where does it come from? Not a trick question. Tree of life, where was that? Garden of Eden, right? Garden of Eden.

God put the tree of life there for us to eat from it and to be refreshed in our relationship with God and our relationship with the others but we chose not to eat from it. If you go all the way through to the end of the Bible story, the very last chapter of the Bible, do you know what's there?

Last chapter of the Bible is the tree of life. And that tree of life is bearing fruit and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. What he's saying is and Proverbs is saying if you choose gentleness and grace instead of anger, you can be part of God's restoring process, his great restoring work that he's doing in this world and you can be an instrument of healing in the lives of other people.

And you know it all can begin with your tongue. It's amazing. So I want to get kind of practical about a couple of things. Because as we think about what does it mean to have gentle words?

What does it mean to have gracious words? There's a couple of areas where I just want to kind of briefly talk about. And actually, Fiona, if you could bring up two books that I have there.

[34 : 45] We have outside just a few books that I, a couple of books that I want you to, sorry, just take those. Thanks. A couple of books that I want to recommend. If you think, actually I have an issue with this.

There's two books. One is called A War of Words and another called is Practicing Affirmation. They are excellent books. I encourage you to get them. There's only about three or four copies so rush out and get them before someone else does.

But I encourage you to do that. But here is what I want to, as you on go in this conversation and thinking about it, but I'm just going to briefly mention a couple of things. God's grace and healing words work through affirmation, encouraging, building others up, and through correction or rebuke.

You notice in Proverbs it talks about both, rebuke and affirmation and grace. You see, affirmation is binding up, building up, healing the wounds.

Correction is like a surgeon's scalpel which is taking out some of the rubbish so that you can be healed, but both are needed. And the goal of both of these with our tongues is to help others to move towards Jesus, not to try and just help people to feel better about themselves, not just to try and fix people with their problems.

[36 : 00] So here's something I want us to think about. Christ-centered affirmation focuses more on internal character than external performance. So if you wanted to build somebody up, you know, if the only things you affirm somebody for are how nice their hair is or how well they did on the grades, if that's the only thing you affirm them for, what's the culture you're sowing?

You're sowing a culture that sees performance and appearance as the most valuable things. But if you sow a culture which focuses on Christ-like character and encourages them that, then that is going to be the fruit of what you're going to be cultivating.

You see, when my wife is gracious to me when I'm being a complete idiot, I often say to her, thank you for being so gracious to me.

I see God working in you. And she does the same to me. And you know, what's the kind of culture that you think if we have that kind of affirmation in our relationships, what culture will that reproduce?

over time, it's more likely to produce a Christ-honoring, life-giving, refreshing one where we're pursuing Christ and His grace together.

[37 : 20] That's not a guaranteed return, okay? So be careful. Don't use affirmation as a manipulation tool to get what you want. That's, you know, that's called flattery.

You know, don't you say, okay, thank you for I just see God's servant heart in you and just the way you serve me is amazing. And when's dinner ready? Don't do that.

Don't go there, okay? That's what you do to your boss, right? Because you want to get promotion, okay? That's not what we're talking about. But if you affirm God's grace in someone's life, where you see, and you give God credit for you, where you see them serving, where you see them persevering, where you see them doing things which you think that is honoring to Christ, point it out to them.

Point it out to them. That's not puffing people up, that's encouraging people to godliness. And you know, the danger of affirmation is we become flatterers because it actually becomes all about ourselves because we were like someone to say, oh, you're lovely, and then someone to say, oh, you're lovely, and we're all kind of lovely together.

Right? That is not Christ-centeredness. Christ-centeredness also means that while I affirm, I'm also willing to correct. And some of us, I notice in our relationships, people you're closest to, often you're more willing to correct them, right, than to affirm them.

[38 : 45] And people who are maybe in the church you don't know quite so well, you're sometimes more willing to affirm them a little bit, sometimes superficially, but we're not willing to correct people so much graciously because we struggle with that.

But you know, in relationships where we're walking alongside each other, the people who have loved me the most have been those people who've been willing to come to me when I'm being selfish, when I'm saying things which are just not great, when my tone is wrong, and they come to me and say things like, hey, Chris, I noticed you said that.

I'm not sure, like, I'm sure you've got a reason for it, but I'd love to hear, like, what was going on there. They're not coming to attack me, they're not coming to try and get their own way, to just change me.

What they're trying to do is they're trying to listen to me, but help to point me towards Christ. And sometimes that's a risk because sometimes they risk me being angry at them.

But they love me enough not to condemn me or judge me, but to help me move towards Christ. I wonder, do you do that with other people in grace and kindness? Because that's where healing comes, through affirmation and through correction.

[40 : 01] But here's one of the things that I've noticed. One of the things about when you get married, or before you get married, actually, is we're often very good at seeing all the great qualities in our future spouse.

Okay? You know, even the negative ones you tend to gloss over a little bit. You know, they talk a lot, but hey, that's cute. You know, they're really laid back or they're more organized than me, but hey, I like that.

And then you get married. And then, after a short while, you begin to start seeing the whole more than the doughnuts. You begin to see all that's missing more than what is actually there.

Right? You know what I mean? And the tendency is to see all the faults and then to try and correct everything. Okay? And what we don't realize, is that affirmation and correction, whether it's in a marriage, whether it's in a CIG, actually works like a bank account.

Every correction is a withdrawal. Every affirmation is a deposit, but it's not a one-on-one ratio. Because, if I say to my wife, hey, I really appreciate you cooking for me tonight, but don't cook the chicken like that ever again.

[41 : 16] What have they heard? What do they hear? They only heard correction. Right? It's not one-on-one. You see, what we need to do is, and sometimes we get into the habit of saying, yeah, well, I said something nice to them and then we said something harsh to them and we think, yeah, but I said it nice to you yesterday and we don't realize if you haven't got the ratio right, you'll get into overdraft in your relationship.

And they say that three to ten affirmations to every correction is the right ratio depending on the health of your relationship. How you doing?

And the crazy thing is, if you get that ratio wrong, your kids or your spouse or your CG members will very soon tune out to your correction. You notice that?

You know, I had a woman come up to me after a sermon I preached a long time ago. Not here. So don't start looking around. See who this is. And she said to me, first thing, she comes straight up to me and says, you know your sermon, you totally misrepresented that person there.

And I was like, oh, thank you. Thank you for the love. I appreciate that. But, you know, I completely ignored everything, like legitimate criticism that she may have had of me because I just thought she was negative.

[42 : 41] Now, for someone I know is for me and has a track record of just encouraging me. They can tell me pretty much anything they like and I'm more likely to listen to them because I know that they're for me.

That's the culture we need in our marriages, in our families, in our church, in our communities. We're not afraid to correct, but we do it out of a culture of affirmation.

But here's the final thing I want to talk us about because I want us to think about how our ratio is doing.

If we really believe the gospel is powerful, enough to change our hearts, to sweeten our tongues, to win this war of words, then we need to be a community whose affirmations and corrections are fueled by the gospel.

So often in Christian community we talk about things like accountability and what that means is checking whether you produce the fruit or not. And basically, what do we do?

[43 : 53] We do things like, hey, did you shout at your kids this week? And you're like, yes. And then you're like, okay, okay, have you said sorry? Yes. And then it's like, okay, let's pray that you'll be more disciplined for next week.

And that's it. That's what we think accountability is. That is not gospel accountability. That's just picking fruit. That's just doing fruit level accountability. But if it goes down to the root of our hearts, then what we need to be doing is seeing that Jesus' words are powerful to speak right down to the heart conditions that we have.

And we need to use His words with each other in community. We need to rehearse the cross with each other daily so that we're healing and not wounding.

You see, Hebrews 3 says, exhort one another daily so you'll not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. You know, when I mess up, when I fail in this area as a broken sinner, here is something that I need to be hearing for myself.

I need people to come and speak these kind of words into my life. Chris, I know you've messed up but you're God's child, forgiven and dearly loved.

[45 : 10] You are chosen, delighted in, valuable and accepted in Jesus. God is proud to call you His son. Do not look down or focus on yourself but look up into His loving eyes.

Don't hide in shame or fear. Don't let the enemy accuse you anymore. You're a warrior under His command. Fight with His strength. You are Chris, a prince in His army.

You are Chris, a child of the king. You are Chris, a mighty warrior. Kill those lies. Rise up in His power. Rise up because He goes for you in victory. That's what I need to hear in my heart.

That is where the gospel is speaking into my life. And if you and I are going to be a community which is affirming and correction, we need to see the power of the gospel. Do you see how much more powerful that is than saying, hey, yeah, let's pray that you just hold your tongue this week.

Seriously, that's what we need to be about. That's the kind of community Christ died to be. That we will know that we're not going to justify our words. We're going to come in deep level repentance.

[46 : 17] That we're going to gospel each other regularly through WhatsApp in your community group. And as you do that, what you'll see is over time a culture of refreshment and of restoration and of healing in a world which is filled with hurtful words.

So let's, I just want us to stop and pray. I want you to actually, I believe the Holy Spirit is actually speaking to some of you right now.

And I want you actually to open up your hands to say, yes, I'm willing to hear what you want me to, you want me to hear right now. As you open up your hands, I want you to think about, how am I doing with that ratio?

Where is my heart? Do I need to actually really repent rather than just saying I'm sorry for fruit level sins?

Do I need to realize that I've been under condemnation and accusation for a long time? And I need the gospel just to be spoken into my life again. I want you just to take this, this minute just to actually speak, engage with Jesus right now.

[47 : 50] Ask for His Spirit to speak to you. of the pose. Another stretch.

Ask for His Spirit to speak to you. the child.

I want you to think about, but is there one person who you know that you have not really affirmed very much in the gospel?

Maybe you know you've just been filled with correction towards them. I want you to think of one person that this week you'll maybe write a note to.

You'll maybe send a WhatsApp to. You'll maybe just verbally say to them. Whether you'll commit speaking words of life to them.

[49 : 19] Bring that person to Christ now. Ask him to give you just such a knowledge of your grace, his grace towards you, that you can extend back to others.

Father, I just...

I realize even in preparing this that I just fall far short of the way that I use my words.

Sometimes I'm too lazy to affirm people because I think they already know. I said something to them a few months ago. I'm too lazy to say to them. I don't know. And yet I don't see the power of your gospel, the power of life that you have given me, stewarded me with my tongue to be able to bless, heal, restore.

Lord, I pray for us. Lord, there's some of us who've been very hurt by words here. I pray your healing power in their lives right now.

[50 : 48] I pray that they'd hear your words of grace to them. I pray that they'd know that you are God who always speaks words which are called to bring life.

Pray for us who we know that we have an anger problem. We know we're critical. We know we complain. I pray.

Sweeten our tongues, Lord, with your word. Help us to run back to you. Find forgiveness and new power to change.

In Jesus' name. Amen.