

Biblical Conflict Resolution, Part 9 | speak wisely

I. Speak Cautiously.

- Proverbs 12:18; Leviticus 5:4; Psalm 106:33; Psalm 57:4; James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:4; Proverbs 4:20-22
- The Hebrew word translated “rashly” can also be translated thoughtlessly.
- Though it may be easy for us to interpret “rash” speaking as “harsh” or “unkind,” the picture we have painted is primarily the thoughtlessness which grows in the soil of disobedience. And this disobedience need not be the picture of teenage angst of which we conceptualize when we hear the word “rebellious.” We’re simply talking about living one’s life for oneself instead of God.
- It’s easy to consider how harsh, angry attacks would be like the thrusts of a sword, but what we’re actually learning here is that these wounds are likely being produced by someone not intending to produce them.
- If you’re on the receiving end of hard words, just remember that if you are thinking wisely, foolish talking doesn’t have to affect you. Just like God can protect His people from physical fire, He can also shield us from the fire of another’s tongue. But that requires that we be maturing into Christ’s image.
- Being quick to hear and slow to speak means that we have to be quick to think about what’s about to come out of our mouths. We absolutely must not be thoughtless in our communication.
- When in conflict, do you approach your words with the careful realization that if you speak the wrong thing you will be working at cross-purposes with God?
- This discussion about biblical conflict resolution is not simply about how to get out of conflict. Ultimately, we should want to avoid getting into conflict in the first place. And a big part of that requires that we speak wisely, and that’s going to require that we speak cautiously.
- It’s not true that if you could speak with perfect wisdom, no one would ever sin against you and plunge you both into conflict. If that were true, Jesus would not have endured the multitudes of conflict in His life. But—at least—the conflict won’t be a result of your sin.

II. Speak Humbly.

- Philippians 2:3-8
 - First, there is an unequivocal command that we never be selfish or conceited. That means that everything that comes next will have to be focused on something other than our feelings and our desires. What is that focus?
 - Second, to the degree we’re not to be selfish, we have to be humble. In so doing, we will regard other people as being more important than ourselves. We could do a whole series on that point alone, but we must move forward. So, how do we become that humble?
 - Third, we must take upon ourselves the very mind and attitude of Jesus Christ. In order to illustrate what that mind and attitude are, Paul reminds the readers that Jesus is 100% God, yet despite that fact, He willingly took on human flesh, experienced life as a human being, didn’t have to convince everyone He met that He was God and deserved to be worshipped, but instead, He served them—most specifically—He served them by dying on the cross to purchase their redemption.
- Do you want to be humble? Do what Jesus did. Even if you actually had something about which you could be proud, and—by the way—you don’t . . . neither do I . . . but even if you did, you would gladly set it aside in order to serve others no matter the cost or requisite thanks. Then and only then as you strive to speak cautiously, will you rightly deduce which words will bring healing in the moment.

- Ephesians 4:1-3 — Let's assume that everything on that list flows from first point about being humble. If you are humble, then you will cautiously choose your words very carefully, and those words will be Spirit-controlled, patient, tolerant, loving, and diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace which Christ purchased on the cross.

III. Pride

- Daniel 9:3-4
 - There are far too many professing believers who would—though they may not say it—would hear someone say Daniel's words and simply assume he was pridefully boasting about his spirituality. But Daniel was not being prideful. All he was doing was explaining what he had done, and—in this case—he was doing so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
 - If you are saying something factual about yourself that it would be completely appropriate for someone else to say about you, then it's not automatically prideful.
 - So, if the words don't betray a prideful heart, what does? It's all about the motivation. Daniel wasn't seeking the praise of men, he was recording what he did—specifically in light of the reality of his great God.
- Proverbs 27:2, 25:7
 - What made the words a sin? They were seeking their own praise and glory. But what if telling the truth about yourself gives praise and glory to God? That, my friends, is not arrogant, boastful, prideful, or conceited.
 - But—as always—we sinful humans can't see a person's motivations, therefore—like the Pharisees of old—we default to judging people based solely off their external behavior. “Are they wearing a phylactery? They must be holy. Did they just say something positive about themselves? They must be prideful.”
- True arrogance and pride are rarely identifiable by what a person does or says. The only way to identify them for sure is to know the individual's motivation. But that's a process that requires intimacy and conversation, so most people find it easier to simply dismiss the person as being prideful.
- If someone does something that is not inherently sinful, but we judge them as being prideful without doing our due diligence . . . we are the prideful, arrogant ones. Jesus' own words from John 7:24 should echo in our ears, “*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*”
 - Isaiah 11:3-4 — Referring to the coming Messiah's righteous judgment, we learn that righteous judgement is right. It's accurate, good, innocent, acceptable, and factual. In order to know what is true in their heart, you have to do a deep dive. (Proverbs 20:5)
 - No such judgment should casually be made off an external observation . . . unless the action or word itself is actually condemned in the Scriptures. Speaking well of oneself for God's glory is not condemned; to the contrary, it is exemplified from the beginning to the end of the Bible.
- Your motivation is the key to your pride. Are you being selfish, rebellious, self-worshipping, and disobedient? You're prideful. You're arrogant. But if you are being cautious because you only want to speak those words that would please the Lord and heal the listener, then you are being humble. And even if those honest, healing sentences have to include the words, “I'm sorry, but you're wrong. I did not sin against you when I did what I did. You may not have liked it, but it was being done out of obedience to God and love for you. If you're interested, I can show you from the Scriptures what it says about my words and actions.”