

Open Your Mouth
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This week was the celebration called Juneteenth, which is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery in America. It celebrates June 19th, 1865 when Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that all slaves were now free.

Here's the problem - this was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation - which had become official January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation had little impact on Texas slaves due to the minimal number of Union troops to enforce the new Executive order. Also, the news was deliberately withheld by the slave owners so they could maintain the labor force on the plantations.

If you are not a Christian, the devil wants to keep you from hearing the good news. If you are a Christian, Satan wants you to keep your mouth closed when it comes to sharing the good news about Jesus Christ!

We are in a sermon series called Open. So far, we have taken a look at Open Doors, Open Eyes and Open Ears. Today I am preaching a sermon entitled Open Your Mouth.

Let me begin by saying there are times you should keep your mouth shut!
 Proverbs 13:3 says:

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

In other words, there are times you should keep your mouth closed! In fact,
 Proverbs 10:19 says:

Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.

Did you know that the less you talk, the smarter you appear to others? Proverbs 17:28 says:

Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.

That is so true! I saw this the other day – I don't know if Facebook has ever caused the lame to walk, but it has sure caused the dumb to speak! The Bible is clear that there are times to keep our mouths shut. Ephesians 4:31 says:
Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Ephesians 5:3-4 says:

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

When it comes to putting people down, cussing people out, gossiping about people or lying to people – we need to keep our mouths closed. Ephesians 4:29 teaches us:

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

If you're not sure what is helpful to people, 1 Peter 4:11 says:

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

So, if you're wondering if you should keep your mouth open or closed, ask yourself, "Is this something God would say?" If not, don't say it!

This is very important, because Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37

I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

That's pretty serious!

Now I know people have gone to extremes in teaching on the power of words. I understand all about "name it and claim it." But there is very plain teaching in the Bible about the power of words – either for good or for evil.

Whoever said "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" was wrong. Words have power. Proverbs 18:21 says:

Life and death are in the power of the tongue.

Words have the power to hurt or the power to heal.

Words have the power to destroy or the power to build.

Words have the power to encourage or the power to discourage.

Words have the power to curse or the power to bless.

Words have the power to lie or the power to speak truth.

Words have the power to kill or the power to give life.

Your words can release the promises of God or block the promises of God.

If you don't think so – remember, a negative report kept the Children of Israel out of the Promised Land!

Satan wants to block your blessings! He wants to keep you from receiving your promises from God. One of his main tools to accomplish that is words.

That's why it's so important for us to control what we say. James 3:6-10 says:

The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

The words you speak minister either life or death.

Praise results in life. Putdowns result in death.

Compliments minister life. Criticism ministers death.

Gratitude ministers life. Grumbling ministers death.

I know it's hard to control what you say. In fact, we can't do it without God's help!

Psalm 141:3 says:

Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.

That should be a prayer we all pray on a regular basis!

So – I've told you about when you should keep your mouth shut. Let's look at three times you should open your mouth.

1- You should open your mouth to worship

Psalm 51:13 says:

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

I'm not spending a lot of time on this today, but let me just say that praise should start in your heart and come out of your mouth!

Thayer's Greek Lexicon says the word used in the original Greek for thanks means "to feel grateful and to give thanks." A lot of people say, "I'm thankful in my heart so I don't need to express it." WRONG! The Bible teaches otherwise. Yes, God wants us to be grateful in our hearts, but He wants to hear it from our mouths!

Worship is an attitude of the heart that is expressed outwardly. So, your worship should not stay in your heart, it should come out of your mouth. And it should not stay just in church. It's an everyday thing! Your everyday praise doesn't have to be like worship service praise. It could be as simple as not giving luck any credit!

I hate it when Christians say they received something good because they got lucky! That doesn't glorify God! Instead, we should say like the Psalmist in Psalm 40:16

Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let those who love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!"

We should continually say, "The Lord be magnified!"

- When people say I'm lucky in life, I will refuse to give luck any credit – instead I'll magnify God for blessing me.
- When my doctor tries to take the credit for my healing, I will magnify God for being my Great Physician.
- When my financial planner tries to take credit for my financial increase, I will magnify Jehovah Jireh – my Provider!
- I don't even take any credit for myself – I will bless the Lord my God at all times – His praise shall continually be in my mouth!

You should open your mouth to worship your God!

2- You should open your mouth to witness

By the way, opening our mouths to worship is one of the ways we open our mouths to witness. Psalm 40:3 says:

He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God: many will see it, and fear (revere and worship) and put their trust in the Lord.

Praise is one of the ways we evangelize unbelievers!

When people see us praising God during trouble – it draws them to God.

When we praise God – it impacts other people!

When we praise God – it builds faith in us and other people!

But we must also open our mouths to share the Gospel with unbelievers. Paul said in Ephesians 6:19-20

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel... Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

There is a quote from St. Francis that says – Share the gospel all day long. If necessary, use words. Let me just say – it will become necessary to use words! Don't think you can lead someone to Christ through your walk alone – you must also share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them!

That's why I think it's better to say – Preach the Gospel all day long. When necessary, use words. If we don't use words – we miss the point of the walk. That would be like saying, Feed the hungry all day long. If necessary, use food.

Obviously, you must use food to feed hungry people and the food of witnessing is the word of God! We must open our mouths to worship God and to witness to others.

3- You should open your mouth to do spiritual warfare

Spiritual warfare is primarily a war of words. Satan's main tools are words – temptation, accusation, condemnation and deception all involve words.

The number one way people open the door to the devil is by the words they speak. The average Christian thinks that they can say whatever they want to anybody at any place at any time. Well you can, but Proverbs 6:2 says

You are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth.

The words we speak matter because the words we speak have power. Your words have the power to bless or curse – you get to choose! Out of your mouth can proceed blessing or cursing. To bless means “to speak well of, to ask God to bless them with health, happiness and prosperity.” To curse means the opposite. It means to speak evil, harm or towards someone.

Blessings are positive words spoken over ourselves or others.
Curses are negative words spoken over ourselves or others.

My point today is that in order to defeat the devil we must stop speaking curses over ourselves, our families, our money. We curse ourselves with statements like:
I feel like I'm losing my mind
My marriage is doomed to fail
I'll never succeed - No one in my family ever succeeds
We'll never get ahead financially
God never blesses me

Now – I understand that words alone won't make you or break you – But there is power in those words. Our words either open the door to the devil or shut the door to the devil.

You must stop cursing yourself and start speaking words of blessing over yourself. This may seem strange to you at first, but Isaiah 65:16 says:

Someone on earth who blesses himself will bless himself by the God of truth.

It's biblical to speak blessings over yourself! If I asked you this: would you curse something God wants to bless? You would say, “Of course not.” Yet we curse ourselves while God wants to bless us. My brothers and sisters – these things ought not to be! To overcome the devil – we must get into agreement with God. Hebrews 10:23 says:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

The Greek word for confession is homologeo. It literally means to speak the same thing as another. To say the same thing as whom? That's where you choose. Your words either agree with God or they agree with Satan. Your words either say what God says or they say what Satan says.

All of us face the same choice: to believe God or believe Satan. We either believe what God says is true or what Satan says is true. We either confess what God says about our circumstances, or what Satan says about them.

God wants you to agree with His Word; Satan wants you to agree with his words. God wants you to say the same thing He is saying; Satan wants you to say the same thing he is saying.

If you want to defeat the devil, you must begin to speak what God says. Revelation 12:11 says:

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Notice that three things are required to overcome Satan.

- 1- Faith in the blood of Jesus. But faith alone is not enough.
- 2- You must live according to the word. In this case it is loving God even more than you love life! But knowing and doing the word are still not enough.
- 3- You must speak the Word.

To overcome Satan, you must know the truth, live the truth and speak the truth. It's not enough to believe – faith without works is dead. We know that without faith we don't receive anything from God, but faith is not enough. James 4:2 also says, *You have not because you ask not.*

Here's an example - we get saved by believing in Jesus, but it takes more than just believing right things. Romans 10:8-10 says:

The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Believing in your heart is important, but so is confessing with your mouth.

Eph. 6 lists the spiritual armor and then it gives us our only offensive weapon in verse 17: *...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

I was raised in church where we were taught to turn the other cheek, not to fight. We were taught that all fighting was bad. I'll never forget when I was a little kid living in Detroit and I finally got big enough to ride my bike around the block on my own. There was a kid on the other side of the block who was a bully. Every time I went around the block he would chase after me, knock me down and beat me up.

My dad noticed I quit riding my bike around the block. He asked me why. I told him about the bully and he told me these words that set me free. He said, "Son, you can't let anyone bully you like that. Next time he does that, you pick up the nearest stick and beat him with it." I thought it was a trick or a test or something. I said, "Really?" He said, "Really."

The next time I went around the block, the bully came running up to me, but he didn't know he was about to meet a different Joey – a new and improved Joey – G.I. Joey. I told him, "You better leave me alone."

He said, "Why, what are you going to do about it?" I said, "My dad told me if you bothered me anymore I should pick up the nearest stick and beat you with it." He said, "Yeah, right." But I saw the fear in his eyes! He backed off and never bothered me again.

I learned an important truth that day - I won the fight by hearing my father's voice and speaking my father's words. And you will win spiritual battles when you hear your heavenly Father's voice and speak your Father's Word!

Jesus is our example and that's how he overcame Satan in Matthew 4. Satan tempted Jesus three times and every time Jesus responded – "It is written" – and then He quoted the word of His Father.

Jesus won the battle by speaking His Father's Words. We also win the battle by speaking our Father's words! Here's how you do it:

When Satan comes against you with fear – you speak the word of your Father and say **IT IS WRITTEN** - God has not given me the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and a sound mind.

When Satan comes against you with condemnation – you speak the word of your Father and say **IT IS WRITTEN** - There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

When Satan comes against you with feelings of inadequacy – you speak the word of your Father and say **IT IS WRITTEN** - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

When Satan comes against you trying to steal your job or your money – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - My God shall supply all of my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Satan comes against you trying to make you sick – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - By His stripes I am healed.

Even when it looks like Satan won a victory over you – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN

My Father always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus.

I am more than a conqueror through Him that loved us.

No weapon formed against me will prosper!

Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world!

If God is for me, who can be against me!

For every attack of Satan – you have the answer – God’s answer!

For every word from Satan – you have a greater Word – God’s Word!

Can you open your mouth and thank God for the Voice of our Father revealed in His Word!