

Five Qualities Every Christian Laborer Must Possess

Lesson 1—Godly Speech

Background Bible Passage:

Key Verse:

Before Class



Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- How strongly developed is the quality of godly speech in your life?
- To what extent would you consider yourself a “laborer” for Christ?
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week they are absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.” Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Opening Questions

SAY: Let’s talk about where you are in life for a minute. I want you to be honest and I want to go around the room and have everyone give an answer:

- *What are you looking forward to (this summer, this fall, etc.)?*
- *If you could go back and do anything different this past school year, what would it be?.*
- *What do you want God to do in your life?*
- *[Answer this silently to yourself] If your whole life were judged by how you lived this past school year, what do you think God would say to you? Are you happy with this?*

SAY: For the next few weeks we're going to focus strongly on what it will take for you to be ready for the upcoming school year, on what it means to be a campus missionary, and the series we're beginning today is simply: *The Five Qualities Every Christian Laborer Must Possess*.

- *What are the five qualities that you think every Christian laborer must possess to be effective in living for Jesus?*

SAY: Each week for the next five weeks we'll discuss one of the five qualities—The first one that we're going to look at is: Godly Speech. To effectively live for Christ you must have godly speech.

Discussion Questions

SAY: Listen to the following errors from church bulletins and notice how one little error can change the entire meaning:

The following are *actual* announcements taken from *actual* church bulletins:

1. Don't let worry kill you -- let the church help.
2. Thursday night - Potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.
3. Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.
4. For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
7. This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.
8. At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.
9. Next Sunday a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the new carpet will come forward and do so.

SAY: In a similar way, one little "slip" of the tongue can change the way people look at you. How you use your tongue carries a powerful impact not only on your life, but on others as well. Consider the following advice about how to use your speech:

- *The tongue is the most dangerous muscle in the body.*
- *Gossip is sharing private information with those who are not a part of the problem or the solution.*
- *Big people talk about ideas; Regular people talk about things; Little people talk about others.*
- *Men and women, like fish, would be much safer if they kept their mouths closed.*
- *An encourager will never be out of work*

BIBLE LESSON

Assign volunteers the following verses to have ready when you need them—Ephesians 4:25 and 4:29, Psalm 141:3-5, James 1:19, Psalm 34:11-14, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 11:11-13, Proverbs 8:6-8.

- *What are some ways that a person can misuse their speech? (Cussing, gossiping, lying, cutting down others, etc.)*
- *Why do you believe that these uses are wrong? (They'll probably say, "Because the Bible says so!" Ask them where... Where does the Bible say that these things are wrong? Do we really believe this because the Bible says so, or is it just because someone once told us to believe this? If you are going to be effective in living for Christ, it's important that you not only know what you believe but what the Bible says about what you believe, not just what someone once said at church. There is a big difference between knowing the Bible and knowing about the Bible.*)

SAY: Today we don't have time to discuss every bad and good use of your tongue but we're going to take a look at some key verses where the Bible specifically addresses issues of how to use your words.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Ephesians 4:25 and 4:29

- *What do these verses teach us?*
- *How would you define unwholesome talk? (i.e., It's more than just cussing, but anything that is contrary to building others up and benefiting those who listen.)*
- *Is criticism unwholesome? Is it wrong to correct someone? But what if it tears them down or makes them feel bad?*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Psalm 141:3-5

- *What is David asking for in verse 5? (He is asking for godly correction. Godly correction and rebuke to a brother or sister going the wrong direction is an act of "faithful love." Sometimes it's like a strong medicine that is hard to swallow, but don't refuse it. David said it was "oil" to his head. It was an anointing to him. But also be wise in giving correction. Take a look at verse 3...)*
- *What does David ask God for in verse 3? Why?*
- *Would you use your words differently if God set a guard for your mouth and He Himself kept watch over the words that came out?*
- *Has there ever been a time in your life when you were righteously corrected? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?*

SAY: Few people respond well even to righteous rebuke. Nobody likes to be told that they are wrong, but many times in our lives we need the faithful correction of another. When God called Jeremiah He gave him the following mission, *“Look, I have filled your mouth with My words. See, today I have set you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant”* (Jeremiah 1:9-10). Sometimes certain things need to be torn down before God can plant and grow what He desires.

- *Is there anything in your life (or words) that might need to be torn down before God can grow what He desires?*
- *If your mouth was 100% under God’s control, how differently would you speak?*

KEY VERSE

SAY: Consider the following advice about the tongue:

(1) Listen before you speak.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read James 1:19

- *Who is someone that you might be tempted to speak out against or with whom you might get angry before hearing them out? What about your parents? Why do you or don’t you feel this way?*
- *Do you know of any situations where you or someone you know “lost their cool” before hearing someone out and made matters worse?*

Also, consider the following:

Proverbs 18:13—*“He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.”*

Proverbs 29:20—*“Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

(2) Only speak the truth.

- *What are some of the consequences of lying?* (People don’t trust you, you have to live in your web of lies, you lose friends, you stir up trouble...but the worst consequence is that you have a broken relationship with God.)

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Psalm 34:11-14

- *What consequences of lying does this verse use?* (If you love life and want to see many good days...don’t use your tongue for evil or lies.)
- *What is the “fear of the Lord”?*

SAY: The “fear of the Lord” is a GOOD thing and something that everyone who desire holiness must have. It’s not a trembling dread of God, as if He desires to squish you like a bug, but a awe-filled respect and regard, that God is on the throne and not you and that in your life you must avoid sin at all costs because God will not ever tolerate sin; He judges sin and disciplines His children who don’t walk in His ways.

This is the what the Bible says about the “fear of the Lord”:

Proverbs 3:7b—“*Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.*”

Proverbs 8:13—“*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way. And the perverted mouth, I hate.*”

Proverbs 9:10—“*The fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*”

Proverbs 10:27—“*The fear the Lord prolongs life...*”

- *Would your friends at school this past year say that you are a person who “fears the Lord”? Would they say that you seek holiness in your speech and actions? Why or why not?*
- *Is it a sin to exaggerate? (Anything that is not true is a lie. Exaggerations are lies. [Pride is also probably involved here.] There is no such thing a “just a little white lie.” A lie is a lie. If it’s not true, you don’t need to be saying it.)*

SAY: It’s easy to be dishonest in today’s society—whether you’re “faking it” in an on-line chat room or telling a “fib” to your parents. But dishonesty is more than just telling lies. How do you really cherish honesty as a value? You must decide whether or not you are going to be a completely honest person because if you leave any room for debate, those are the areas where you will let deception creep in.

Also, consider the following verses about lying:

Proverbs 19:9—“*A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will perish.*”

Proverbs 12:22—“*The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.*”

(3) Avoid harsh words

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Proverbs 15:1

- *What does a gentle answer turn away? (wrath)*

- *What does a harsh word stir up? (anger)*
- *In what relationship might this advice help you the most?*

(4) Avoid Gossip

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Proverbs 11:11-13

- *How would you define gossip?*

SAY: Gossip could be defined as “needless” talk. It’s the joy of talking bad about someone “behind their back.” It doesn’t build up, it tears down, and those who love gossip will find that they will lose their friends of good character and live surrounded with those who also enjoy gossip. A gossip always attracts others gossips.

- *How do you think you can protect against gossip?*

SAY: Here are some suggestions: If someone comes to you with juicy information, *did they see it themselves or did they hear about it from another?* If they are not an eye-witness, they are a false witness and it is gossip and evil if they pass along the information to you, and it is just as wrong and evil if you provide an ear for their sin.

- *So once they begin talking, this is what you do: Say, “Wait a minute. Is this something you saw yourself or just heard about?”* If they didn’t see it themselves, tell them that you don’t need to know it and they don’t need to be passing it along to anyone else. A true friend who is godly and in a growing relationship with Christ will understand and receive your correction. If your friend is not godly or a growing believer, you may need to question how close a friendship you should have with him or her.
- *If they saw it themselves, your next question should be: “Why is this something that I need to know?”* In other words, what’s the motive or purpose behind what they are saying? It may be information regarding a situation about which you need to know; they might be needing advice; etc. But, if their motive is purely to talk bad about someone or to pass along chatty information, then you need to tell them, either gently or firmly, that you won’t be a part of it.
- *Be careful: Many gossips disguise their information by saying, “We need to be in prayer for...”* when their purpose is not prayer and the work of God but the passing of negative information.
- *How to identify a gossip:*
 - Most gossips begin by saying, “You won’t believe what I heard...” Or, “You’re not going to believe this,” etc.

- Most gossips comes to you excited, even about the most disturbing information. Why? Because they derive a perverse pleasure from sharing negative information.
- Most gossips continually talk negative about people behind their backs, even little one liners such as, “I can’t believe she wore that dress,” etc. This is the same negative attitude that gives birth to their desire to gossip.
- Most gossips are very insecure about themselves: That’s the reason they talk bad about others—to feel better about themselves. This is also the reason that many gossips will respond negatively to correction and will many times find other friends if you are not willing to listen to them. The advantage to this is, as a godly, growing, follower of Christ, it is best for you not to be close friends with a gossip.
- Being best friends with a gossip will almost always hinder your walk with God. Their desire to talk bad about people will become a weight that holds you back and a hindrance instead of an encouragement to closely follow Christ.

A few other things to know about Gossip:

- *Gossip is never positive.* It is always negative information. It’s okay to pass along good information you hear about others.
- *Gossip is never profitable.* It always destroys and deeply affects both the talker and the listener.
- *Gossip is contagious.* Once you hear gossip, you will be tempted to share it with others.
- *Gossip is always sin.* In the end God will judge the motives of the heart.
- *Gossip reveals inward wickedness.* Jesus said that what comes out of your mouth shows what is in your heart.
- *Gossip brings consequences.* Sin always brings consequences both in your relationship with others and in your relationship with God.
- *God will judge gossip.* You will be held accountable for how you lived and what you did.

(5) Commit yourself to speaking only what is right and true

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Proverbs 8:6-8

• *Is there anything in your life that would stop you from making these verses your commitment:*

- I speak only what is right.*
- I speak only what is true.*
- I will not use my mouth for wicked purposes.*
- I speak only what is just.*
- I will not use my mouth for crooked or perverse purposes.*

WRAP IT UP

Prayer Time

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SAY: The purpose of the five qualities that we are talking about in this series is to challenge you to be holy every area of your life and to let God chisel off any rough edges, to firm-up any weak spots, and to prepare you to live for Him as a campus missionary at school and at home every day in every way.

SAY: Today let's make **Psalm 19:14** our prayer:

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.”

Pray specifically today that your students will be characterized by Godly Speech.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests