

What Did You Just Say to Me?

It is offensive, really. It is offensive how I can use my words to pray and then curse someone that cuts me off on the road. It is offensive when I go to Church and say, “we have them (our hearts) with the Lord” then go to school and say, “I hate this person” and “I want to kill myself”. Our words are so powerful and they have the ability to define our lives.

Our speech is actually no joke – physically, mentally and *eternally*. Let me explain.

Our bodies exert a ton of effort to produce speech. We use our stomach muscles, lungs, voice box, teeth, lips, and nose to say a single English word. To speak, a human must use air that is pushed out while exhaling, then use the mouth to form shapes with the teeth and the tongue in order to produce a coherent sound. So, speech, in any form, is much more difficult than most humans realize. It takes a lot of effort to produce a word and that is not an accident. Speech was deliberately designed to be an exhaustive task because our speech should be a deliberate action, not blabber that fills up voids.

Yet, speaking, or rather – spitting out air from your mouth— is the most dangerous thing we can do. People abuse it too much. This air that we push out of our mouths can be used to kill each other. It can cause civil wars. It can even make someone president. Humankind fell after the devil tempted us with a few simple words: “You will surely not die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4)

Understanding the power and influence of speech should help you to realize that your speech is a *gift*, not a right. You and I do not have the right to use words. Rather, God gives us the *gift* of speech. Yet, I still choose to gossip, fight, scream and even condemn. The Gregorian Liturgy says, “You have placed in me the *gift of speech* and opened for me Paradise to enjoy and have given me the learning of Your knowledge.”

It is offensive, really. It’s offensive to your body that works, to your mind that stores that memory, to the hearer that has to deal with the response and mostly, to God. God will never love you any less, but He may get hurt that His precious, most beautiful creation, is not using His gift properly. Jesus HIMSELF is called The Logos – or the WORD.

Pope Shenouda III says, “Therefore, the Second Person, The Logos or The Word is the Person of knowledge, or of reason or wisdom, in the Holy Trinity. Christ is the WORD, ‘in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’” (Col. 23). He is the Wisdom in the Trinity, which is why St. Paul the Apostle said that the Lord Jesus Christ is “the Wisdom of God’ (I Cor. 1:24).” One can clearly see here that, in imitating Christ, we have to be like the *WORD and have the WORD in us*. We have to have knowledge in our speech, wisdom, and reason.

Now, I’m not here to discourage you. Rather, I want to make a list of how we can stop some of the terrible attitudes we carry in our speech. *By God’s grace*, maybe this list can help you and me in being more like Christ when we speak. I like to call this WWJS (What Would Jesus Say):

1. Never speak out of anger or hate. Think first, then speak. (Proverbs 15:1-2)
2. Always say the [Jesus prayer](#) if you think you're about to sin with your words.
3. *Do not, I repeat, DO NOT criticize someone without knowing them. If you have a good relationship with them and you KNOW they are willing to listen, then go to them and speak the truth in love. Jesus *never* embarrassed sinners who wanted to repent. He always defended them and then spoke softly afterward. (ex: the woman [caught](#) in the act)
4. *Make time for [quiet](#) time. Don't speak to people – speak (or listen) to Heaven and nature.
5. Enjoy other people's speech. Truly listen and don't just wait to talk. Listen to them and [stop talking](#).
6. Say more positive things and fewer negative things. Positive people attract positive people. (Proverbs 10:31)
7. *Know what to say in every context. If you don't know how/what to say, do not say anything at all. (Proverbs 13:3)
8. Be mindful of your tone and your style. Learn when to be loud and when to stay calm.
9. When someone is angry, use words to encourage, lift up and support. After their anger passes, you can go back and talk to them logically (and try to help them *if they ask*). (Proverbs 18:21)
10. *Stop asking "why did you do that?" and start asking "how do you feel about that?"
Focus on loving, not on extracting every detail.
11. *Pray for wisdom in thought, speech, and action that God can have mercy on *the* fearful day. (Matthew 12:36-37)

***of the utmost importance**

And above all, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29)

Finally, we do not have an excuse! We have caused enough offense for the past 20-something years. Let's start living a fresh, in-love-with-Christ-attitude life.