

# A Quiet Word

December 2024

Two thousand years ago, God did not just send his son into the world; he also sent his Word to us. He sent a message to us that he loves us. God believes in good communication. God wants to be as clear as possible with us about who he is and what he hopes for us, our relationship with him and his world. Yet, God is quiet, humble, and respectful in his speaking to us. He doesn't just come barging into our world, making a ton of noise, demanding everyone's



attention, while delivering a big announcement he hopes will make all the air waves. Quite the opposite. He sent his son, Jesus, to enter our world through a lowly manger on a silent night in a far corner of the world. There was little fanfare about it. Few people at the time even noticed it. Yet, there has never been a more powerful and impactful message from God, ever. The Apostle John put it this way:

“In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him. And nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created. And his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness can never extinguish it.” (John 1:1-5)

God's gentle but purposeful approach to things made me think a lot about our world today. The tenor of our world currently is not so quiet and calm. We need to remember these precious words of John, and the essence of the Christmas story, for the sake of our own survival and wellbeing as never before. I think we would all agree that our lives have become increasingly filled with useless and constant noise and chatter and we have become addicted to them. Wherever you turn it seems many people are talking and fewer are listening. Worse yet, people's words are increasingly becoming divorced from their souls causing their integrity to unravel. Less frequently, words are chosen to represent the deepest recesses of our hearts and minds; rather, they are frequently crafted to serve what will play best on the internet, be heard in today's news broadcasts, or to take down an adversary or promote one's own brand. It has suddenly become okay to utter something cynical, hurtful, demeaning, and say later you really didn't mean it. God weeps when this happens. He wants us to be truthful and filled with integrity in all that we say and do. No one has higher regard for words and helpful communication than our merciful God. In his Book of Proverbs, King Solomon left us with these pearls of wisdom:

The words of the godly are a life-giving fountain; The words of the wicked conceal violent intentions. (10:11)

Some people make cutting remarks;  
But the words of the wise bring healing. (12:18)  
Those who control their tongue will have a long life;  
Opening your mouth can ruin everything. (13:3)

I just returned from a trip to the Arabian Peninsula where I traveled with a small team of Church leaders visiting workers in the field. I have never been more encouraged with what I saw, especially in Saudi Arabia. The current ruler of the country, Prince Muhammad, is giving Christians more freedom than they have ever had in his country's young history. There are still no registered, above-ground churches in Saudi Arabia or Bibles sold or used publicly.



However, the current government is increasingly becoming more tolerant to Christianity and other religions. The rulers know that more Saudis are becoming exposed to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Seventy percent of the country is under the age of 35 and increasingly conversant with the rest of the world through the internet. The Christian workers we met told us the Saudi government is saying to them, "If you make no noise about what you are doing, we will make no noise either. However, if you become loud and public about what you are doing, we will be forced to shut you down and ask you to leave the country. Therefore, please be quiet, humble, and respectful, make no noise and we will eventually, in the not-so-distant future, allow above-ground churches to emerge and be recognized." These words made me think about Jesus and how he conducted himself during his day.

Jesus was incredibly discerning, strategic, and never called attention to himself during his years of ministry. He brought light, hope, and miraculous healing into people's lives he encountered. Nevertheless, he often told the people he healed not to go running around sensationalizing the miracles he had performed, but rather to be quiet, grateful, and humble about what had happened. Jesus did not need to make big splashes, circus announcements, or riveting news. He knew that over time his movement would gain momentum on its own, one changed life at a time. His truth does not need additional bells or whistles. It speaks for itself and changes lives through its own power. In Luke's Gospel, we are told the following story which clearly delivers this message:

"In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. 'Lord', he said. 'If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.' Jesus reached out and touched him. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be healed!' And instantly the leprosy disappeared. Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened...But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer." (Luke 5:12-14b,15-16)

If we are faithful, humble, wise, and careful, the Gospel message grows on its own through God's mighty Spirit. It does not need any extra help from others or special human programs to succeed. In fact, if anything else it needs us to get out of the way. We are called simply to love God, serve our neighbors in his grace, and pray often for God to do his powerful work in the world. Another story in the Gospel of Luke helps us understand these timeless truths. Jesus said:

"The kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, while he's sleeping or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come." (Luke 4:26b-29)



Harvest time has come in the Middle East, even to the Arabian Peninsula, the birthplace of Islam. God has been at work among the Arab and Persian people for centuries. Even though today there are incredible hardships and tragedies throughout the region which break our hearts and astonish us, God is moving through them in most powerful ways. Through the efforts of countless missionaries and unknown heroes of the faith, seeds of the Good News have been scattered throughout the region for hundreds of years; and they are now ready to sprout and grow in powerful ways. Please continue to pray for our dear friends in this special part of the world where Jesus was born.

During this Christmas season, can we remember how powerful, healing, and impactful our words can be? God called Jesus the "Word" which "gives life to everything created" to help remind us that our words, too, if delivered with sincere faith, can give new life to others who might be struggling or hurting. As King Solomon reminded us, words can be a "life-giving fountain."

Who might need an encouraging word from us this season? Can we carve out a little space this month, sit down and write a letter to someone we once knew more closely, pick up the phone and call an old friend or estranged family member, or shut out all the noise, enter a quiet room and talk to God alone - about all the worries, hopes, and dreams we carry with us each day? Can we commit to leading a more



and truthfulness? Our Lord is always ready to listen to our sincere hearts, faith-filled words, and humble requests.

My family and I hope you have a most blessed and joy-filled Christmas celebration with your family and friends. It is always a blessing for me to share the Word of God with you.